



**CHILD  
ABUSE",**

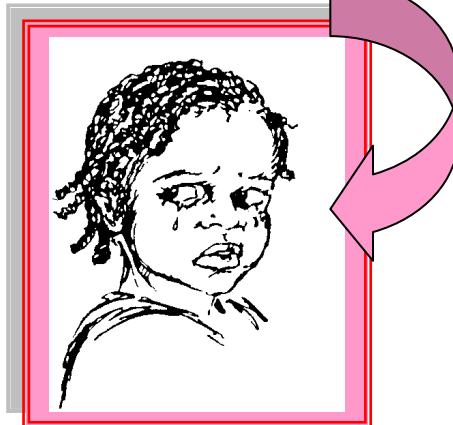
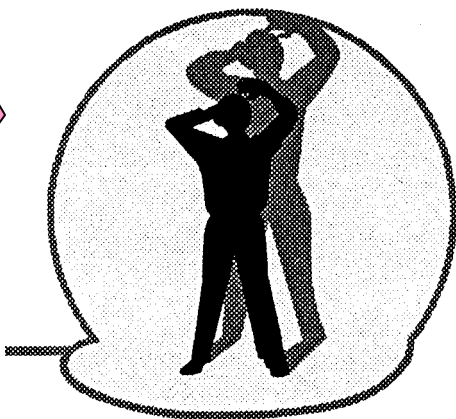


**PARTNER  
ABUSE",**

**ELDER  
ABUSE**



**SEXUAL OFFENCES**



**\*PART TWO.\***

In addition, we have included in this revision of our 2002 "DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS HANDBOOK" a Section Titled "MANTALK", within which we feature, what some of the MAVAW men hold as their personal opinions and beliefs.

# Child Abuse

Steven and Lorelei Turner were each sentenced to 16 years in prison for abusing their three-year-old son to death. John Ryan Turner's short life was filled with rejection. His days were spent restrained by a harness in his bedroom and he was bound and gagged with a tube sock. He weighed just over 20 pounds at death. Most parts of his emaciated body were covered in bruises, scars, sores and self-inflicted bite marks. Yet experts said it was not physical abuse, but emotional rejection that killed the boy. When he could no longer tolerate his mother's anger and his father's disinterest, he withdrew from the world, stopped eating and wasted away.



We don't know how common child abuse is in Trinidad and Tobago, but it has been estimated that as many as one child in ten is affected: -

- Child abuse can occur in households where the mother/father is being abused by her/his male/female partner, as noted in the section of this book called **Partner Abuse**.
- At least one in four men who are violent to female partners will also hit the children.
- Today's abusive parents will be at high risk of being assaulted as seniors by their adult children, a topic addressed in the section of this book called **Elder Abuse**.
- Younger children may be abused by older siblings or cousins who have themselves been abused by parents.

Indeed, the effects of family violence resonate across the years and through the generations unless the dynamic and practice is interrupted by awareness (like this book), counselling (individual and family) and in some cases, legal intervention.

Sometimes the effects of child abuse show up as bruises or cuts. The more damaging injuries will not heal so easily, or be so readily apparent (developmental neglect) and most often are carried long into their adult lives, ending life in pain. One cannot overestimate the harm caused to developing children and adolescents, and the earlier the abuse starts, the more profound will be the consequences. *Some medical research suggests that early abuse or neglect, triggers permanent changes in the brain of a developing child.* Imagine the emotional confusion, of being simultaneously scared of and dependent upon a parent: to be hurt by the person you look to for love and guidance, a person who probably can be caring and gentle at times.

The effects of witnessing the abuse of your mother/father are discussed in the next section of this book. As noted there, if a father-figure is abusing the children, their mother is probably being abused by him as well, **and vice versa**. How can your mother/father protect you from abuse if she/he cannot protect herself/himself?

Child abuse can lead to **emotional problems**, such as *depression and anxiety*, or **behavioural problems** such as *aggression*.

**Symptoms of the effects** can include *nightmares, sleep disturbances, withdrawal from social activities, isolation from peers, aggression with peers, phobias, stomach aches and other somatic complaints, anger and temper outbursts, destruction of property, irritability, bedwetting and, in some cases, self-injurious behaviour and thoughts of suicide*.

Children may **regress to behaviours** more typically found in younger ones, such as *dinginess or thumb sucking*.

Teenagers may engage in **self-destructive behaviours** such as *drug or alcohol abuse, criminal activity, running away, or prostitution*.

Some girls will try and get pregnant in an attempt to find unconditional love from a baby or to gain independence from the family.

Abused children **may feel** hopeless about the future, suffer low- self-esteem, have difficulty trusting and see the world as a dangerous place. Once they realize that their schoolmates do not experience abuse, these children feel alone and ashamed. They learn to keep the family secrets, rarely if ever bring friends home, and see themselves as inferior to their peers. Children from abusive homes may fantasize about life in a “normal” family and many leave homes early.

*It can be assumed that at least one child in each classroom in the country is affected by abuse at home, either abuse of themselves, their mothers, or both.* Informed observers estimate that the average class actually has three to five children affected by abuse.

But teachers will rarely be able to recognize the abused children in their classes. They try very hard to blend in and may vigorously deny suggestions of abuse when confronted. Abused children may or may not have problems at school. For some, school is a safe place and they appear to function well, perhaps even excelling in academics or sports activities. They may engage in many extra-curricular activities, to avoid going home after school.

On the other hand, child abuse often contributes to poor school performance in part because of chronic absenteeism, problems concentrating, lack of sleep, or poor nutrition. *Abused children may be aggressive at school and get into trouble repeatedly.*

As adults, these children may be at higher risk of substance abuse, mental health diagnoses, problems with intimacy in relationships, and eating disorders. Some observers suggest that both males and females who enter the sex trade do so in part because of childhood sexual abuse.

As teenagers, abused girls may find themselves in abusive dating relationships and as women; they may become involved with abusive partners.

Abused boys may grow up to be **those abusive partners**. Women who were sexually abused as girls are more likely to report that they had been sexually assaulted as an adult or sexually harassed in the workplace.

*As teenagers and adults, abused boys (and some girls) may be at higher risk of sexual offending. While the majority of sexually abused boys will not offend sexually, it is often found that known sex offenders are likely to acknowledge a history of sexual abuse in childhood.*

For example, a study reported in a 1995 issue of the Journal of Abnormal Psychology found that 75% of adolescent males who had sexually assaulted a boy reported a childhood history of sexual abuse.

In the USA a history of child abuse is a common characteristic among groups of known criminal offenders. *For example, a study of women in jails or on probation found that 76% of them acknowledged being physically abused as children and half said they had been sexually abused.*

Childhood abuse may elevate a person's chances of being violent in adulthood. *A study of male federal offenders found that the likelihood of having an offence history involving violence was three times higher if the inmate had been abused as a child.*

As reported in a 1996 article from the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, a long-term follow up study of abused children found that, by age 32, half of them had been arrested at least once. One in five had been arrested for at least one violent offence, a higher rate than observed for similar individuals with no history of abuse.

**Is child abuse increasing?** No one knows, but our collective attitudes toward the subject have certainly changed. Our conception of child abuse has broadened from an emphasis on broken bones as the primary indicator to recognition of the harmful effect of words.

Child abuse can be physical, emotional or sexual. Physical and emotional neglect are also forms of child abuse.

A study reported in a 1994 issue of the scholarly journal Child Abuse and Neglect found that in only 5% of cases did children experience only one form of abuse. The most damaging combination was neglect, physical abuse and emotional abuse.

*Experts generally agree that most parents who abuse their children will continue to do so unless they get help, or until the child leaves the home. Early intervention is the key to preventing or limiting the damage caused by child abuse.*

LOCAL STATISTICAL DATA

## *Physical Abuse*

*The baby didn't stand a chance. When she cried her mother would hit her in the stomach. She would slap her on the head, or cover the infant's mouth and nose with a pillow. But it was the shaking — so hard the baby's brain would ricochet inside her skull — that finally silenced her. She was left severely brain damaged and blind.*

A child is **physically abused** if he/she is hit, punched, slapped, burned, thrown, kicked, restrained, or confined unreasonably. Physical abuse can be carried out with weapons or with household objects such as extension cords, rulers, belts, cutlery, or sticks.

Infants are vulnerable to “shaken baby syndrome” which results in permanent damage to the brain. *In a statistics study of intentional injuries suffered by children, more than half of the victims were five years old or younger. Three quarters were under ten.*

It would appear that younger children are the most vulnerable to injury, including soft tissue damage, broken bones and lacerations. According to statistics, averages of 20 infants are murdered each year, almost all by fathers, mothers or other relatives. It is suspected that this number is a dramatic underestimate because child abuse deaths might be put down to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) or other natural causes. *Eight infants were murdered in 1995, three by their fathers, three by their mothers, and one by an aunt.*

LOCAL STATISTICAL DATA

## *Neglect*

An 18-year-old woman is in police custody after two young children were found unattended in a ninth-floor apartment. When officers arrived at 1:15 a.m., they found the apartment locked and the stereo at high volume. The apartment was in disarray and the children, a 21-month-old female and a 10-month-old male, were located in the bedroom. Officers, who changed and fed the toddlers, said the apartment was filthy.

Child neglect can be **emotional or physical**. Often the two occur together.

**Physical neglect** is when a parent or parent surrogate does not give a child adequate nutrition, clothing, hygiene, safe living conditions, supervision, or access to medical care. A physically neglected child may ask the neighbours for food, not wear winter boots when it snows, or be left at home alone.

**Emotional neglect** occurs when a parent fails to give a child attention, nurturance or intellectual stimulation. An emotionally neglected child may watch television all day or wander the neighbourhood from morning till night. They may crave attention from adults and spend a lot of time at neighbours' houses. Neglected babies spend long periods of time in their cribs.

**Neglect** can be done on purpose, as when one child is singled out for poor treatment while the other children are well cared for. More commonly, neglect is not intentional. Neglect is not to be equated with poverty, however. The root of neglect is often the alcoholism or mental illness of the parent. Older siblings sometimes adopt the parental role and care as best they can for the younger ones. Broken homes produce another painful form of neglect when parents fight.

(According to the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, in 1997 about 3 million children in the United States were reported as abused or neglected to government agencies that investigate child abuse. Investigators substantiated abuse or neglect for nearly 1 million of the children reported. Among substantiated cases, 56 percent involved physical or emotional neglect, 25 percent involved physical abuse, 13 percent involved sexual abuse, 6 percent involved emotional abuse, and 13 percent involved other abuse, such as educational neglect or abandonment. Some children experienced multiple forms of abuse.)

## *Emotional Abuse*

"My mother says she wishes I was never born."  
(11-year-old girl calling Kids Help Phone)



**Emotional abuse**, sometimes called **psychological abuse or verbal abuse**, leaves no physical scars but is devastating to a child's developing sense of self and worth.

It includes teasing, belittling and destructive criticism, threats of rejection, insults, taunts, and humiliation. An emotionally-abused child will probably see him or herself as useless, stupid, and unworthy of being loved or respected.



## *Sexual Abuse*

*A prominent university professor who sexually abused his daughter has been sentenced to four years in prison. She was 13 when the abuse began and 18 when it ended. In 1991, when she finally disclosed her father's crimes to police, she told them he had continued to abuse her on weekend passes from the psychiatric hospital where she had been admitted after suffering a nervous breakdown.*

There are a range of behaviours which are sexually-abusive, from exposure of genitals to intercourse. **Sexual abuse** includes fondling, digital penetration of the vagina or anus, simulated intercourse, oral sex, and asking a child to touch an adult in a sexual way.

It also includes inappropriate observation of children (as they dress or bathe), exposure of children to pornography, taking sexually-suggestive pictures of children, or making them watch adults have sex. *Sexual abuse can only rarely be discerned by a medical examination.*

A key feature of child sexual abuse within the family is that it rarely involves an isolated incident. Children are at highest risk for sexual abuse in their own homes or the homes of the abusers, usually one in the same.

This privacy affords many opportunities for unobserved contact with the child, such as bath time or when the child is in bed. But opportunity is not enough. The abuser must trick or otherwise convince the child not to tell anyone what is happening. The child may be too young to realize it is wrong, may mistake the abuse for affection, or may be tricked into thinking it is a game that everyone does.

If or when a child recognizes the abuse as wrong, the abuser can lead them to believe that something bad will happen if the secret gets out. That bad consequence could be for the child, for non-abusive family members, or for the abuser him/herself, whom the child probably loves. Silence can be secured with threats of violence, death, paternal/maternal rejection, or punishment.

A child may want to spare his/her mother/father the anguish of finding out about the abuse, an event which may be followed by the breakup of her/his marriage if the abuser is a marital partner.

It is common that children are assured no one will believe them if they tell or that everyone will think the abuse is their fault. They may think they will go to jail or worry about the consequences for the family if the abuser goes to jail or loses his job.

Contrary to popular belief, a person does not have to be a pedophile to sexually abuse children. Many child sexual abusers are sexually involved with people of their own age or have been able to maintain such relationships in the past.

Sexual offenders are likely to deny their crimes and treatment is unlikely to be successful if this stance is maintained. Some sexual abusers rationalize their behaviour to themselves and others with excuses such as the child was sexually aggressive, the child consented to the activity, or that the abuse was educational.

Almost all known perpetrators of child sexual abuse are male. *Most known cases of sexual abuse involve girls but the true rate of the abuse of boys may be hidden because they are extremely reluctant to come forward.*

Girls are more likely to be sexually abused by someone within the family while boys more often report sexual abuse by adult acquaintances or community professionals. It is often the case that children who were sexually abused by a family member will have been physically abused by him/her as well.

Where physical and sexual abuse are combined, it is highly unlikely that the child will be able to come forward, in part because of fear of the violent repercussions if the disclosure is not believed or not responded to quickly.

LOCAL STATISTICAL DATA



## *Why Would A Parent Abuse A Child?*



The causes of child abuse are as complex as the phenomenon itself and are different for each of the four types of child abuse. The factors identified by researchers to be associated with child abuse break down into four categories.

### **1. PERSONALITY OF THE ABUSER**

Abusive parents usually love their children as much as any parent does, but they often lack parenting skills or maturity, or have personal problems such as substance abuse or mental illness. They tend to have low-self esteem, poor impulse control and may use aggression in other contexts as well. They could be depressed and feel lonely and unhappy. They may not have good social support networks or the social skills to acquire one.

It is often observed that many abusive parents were themselves abused as children giving rise to speculation that they had little or no opportunity to learn non-violent parenting skills.

Abusive parents may also be inflexible, easily annoyed, have unrealistic expectations of children or view their children's behaviour as unusually stressful and negative.

### **2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FAMILY**

Child abuse is rarely the only problem in the family. It may be an extreme manifestation of what has come to be called family "dysfunction." Family problems found to co-exist with child abuse include marital conflict, partner abuse, inter-personal hostility, chaos and disorganization, substance abuse, lack of affection and caring, and poor communication.

There may be a large number of closely-spaced children, frequent changes to the composition of the family and many residential moves. Unemployment, chronic illness and other stressful life events which constitute surmountable challenges to most families can strain the coping strategies of abusive parents.

While blaming the child for abuse is often a fallacious excuse used by abusers, there is some research to show that children in some abusive families are temperamentally more difficult to manage.

This becomes a vicious circle as the negative effects of child abuse worsen the problem behaviours and escalate the use of violence and abuse against them. Sibling-to-sibling violence may be tolerated, even encouraged in these families.

### **3. COMMUNITY FACTORS**

Children and their families do not live in a vacuum. They are affected, positively or negatively, by the quality of local schools, levels of neighbourhood cohesion and stability, and economic conditions. For example, the incidence of child maltreatment in an area may increase if local unemployment rates go up.

Social isolation is a factor common to many abusive families so contact with neighbours can provide protection against caregiver stress, opportunities to observe good parenting, and the surveillance which can lead to early identification of abusive patterns.

Neighbourhoods can also be a negative force, if there is a local tolerance of violence or a collective distrust of police and helping professionals. The presence or absence of effective social resources is also important, such as recreational facilities, public health programs to assist young mothers, and well-funded child protection agencies which can engage in prevention rather than just crisis intervention.

### **4. SOCIETAL FACTORS**

Many people feel that corporal punishment of children is acceptable. This tolerance of physical discipline sends the message that it is okay to hit children.

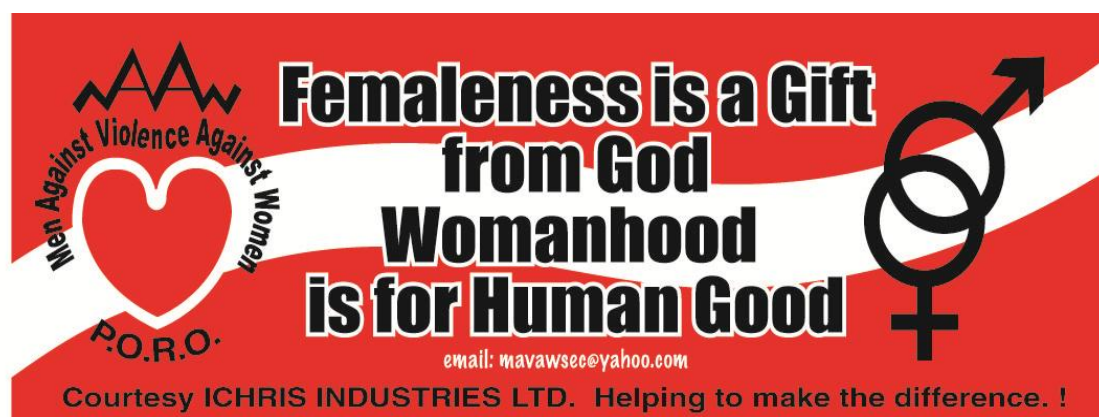
We also see the family as a private institution and are reluctant to interfere with the right of parents to raise children as they see fit. In addition, the use of violence against children cannot be divorced from our general tolerance of violence in society, as evidenced by the pervasiveness of violence in the media.

Seeing children as legitimate sexual targets can be encouraged by advertising where young children are posed to look seductive. There is also widespread access to pornography (on the internet for example) and a reluctance to enforce laws against child prostitution.

Society tolerates child poverty even though it is highly correlated with rates of child abuse and other negative outcomes for children.

Some people believe that stressful circumstances can cause otherwise adequate parents to act abusively. In a small number of cases, caregiver stress may be at the root of child abuse, especially if the child is a baby or toddler and the parent is socially isolated and has no opportunities for respite.

Children with disabilities may also be more vulnerable to abuse in part because of the demands placed on caregivers. Parenting a young child or a disabled child can be stressful but the vast majority of parents are able to cope and find non-abusive ways of relieving the stress.



## *What To Do If A Child Tells You About Abuse*



Many thoughts may run through your mind but remember that the most important consideration is that the child should be protected from further abuse, as should other children who may come into contact with the alleged abuser.

It is extremely difficult for children to tell an adult about abuse and they have chosen you specifically because they trust you to help them. If you let them down, they not make another disclosure for a long time.

There are two stages to your response: -

**FIRST**, you must deal with the immediate needs of the child. It is important to remain calm and not overreact. You may feel angry, guilty, sad, scared or a whole host of other emotions but there will be many opportunities to express these feelings later. Right now, find a quiet and private place and make sure the child knows: -

- You are glad that they had the courage to tell someone
- You are not angry with them
- You do not feel what happened was their fault
- You are going to make sure they are safe

Do not try and solicit details about the abusive behaviour or ask a lot of questions of the child.

**SECOND**, you must call the authorities, even if you have doubts if what you were told is true. You are legally obliged to report the matter and you may be charged with an offence if you do not. It is the job of the proper authorities to investigate allegations and they will determine how the case should be handled. Either call the police or contact the local office of the child protection authorities in your area.

## *If You Suspect A Child Is Being Abused*

Use caution and good sense in identifying child abuse. Every parent makes errors in judgement and action some times. But when it becomes plain that this is a PATTERN or is becoming one, then IT'S TIME FOR HELP.



It is the law that you must report your suspicions to the proper authorities if you believe a child is being abused by a family member or other caretaker such as a daycare worker or teacher to report suspected cases of child abuse, you can call the police or the local child protection office. You do not have to have absolute proof or even be certain that the abuse is occurring.

As long as your concern is genuine and not malicious, you cannot get in trouble for making a report.

Many times neighbours, teachers and family members who suspect a child is being abused do not call the authorities because they "don't want to get involved" or they don't want to ruin someone's reputation with an accusation of child abuse.

However, reporting a suspicion to the proper authorities is a confidential process. These officials have the knowledge and experience to decide if a set of circumstances warrants an investigation.

## *What Happens When A Report Is Made: The Intervention Process*

There are many options legally available to child welfare officials, some more intrusive than others. The decisions are always made using one criterion, however: the child's best interests.

Sometimes the parents are not happy about how the agency responds to the matter, but child protection workers are legally required to do what they perceive to be best for the children.

**First**, they will investigate the allegation, probably by interviewing the child and any other parties who can provide information, to refute or substantiate the allegation. The Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect found that two out of every 100 children are the subjects of reports to child protection authorities. Of these reports, about one in four is substantiated. In other words, in the majority of cases, it was determined that the allegation was groundless, there was no current risk, or that there was not enough evidence for the authorities to act.

If the investigation results in the substantiation of abuse, there are a number of avenues open, all premised on providing a safe environment for the child.

1. The parents may be asked to participate in counselling sessions and/or be amenable to having child protection workers monitor the home environment. Effective parenting is a skill that must be learned, and many abusive parents benefit from support and guidance in this area
2. In a few cases, the authorities will feel that the child's interests are best served by living apart from the family for a while, in a foster or group home. They will seek parental cooperation with whatever plan they deem best but parents who disagree can take the case to court so a judge can review the evidence and make the decision.

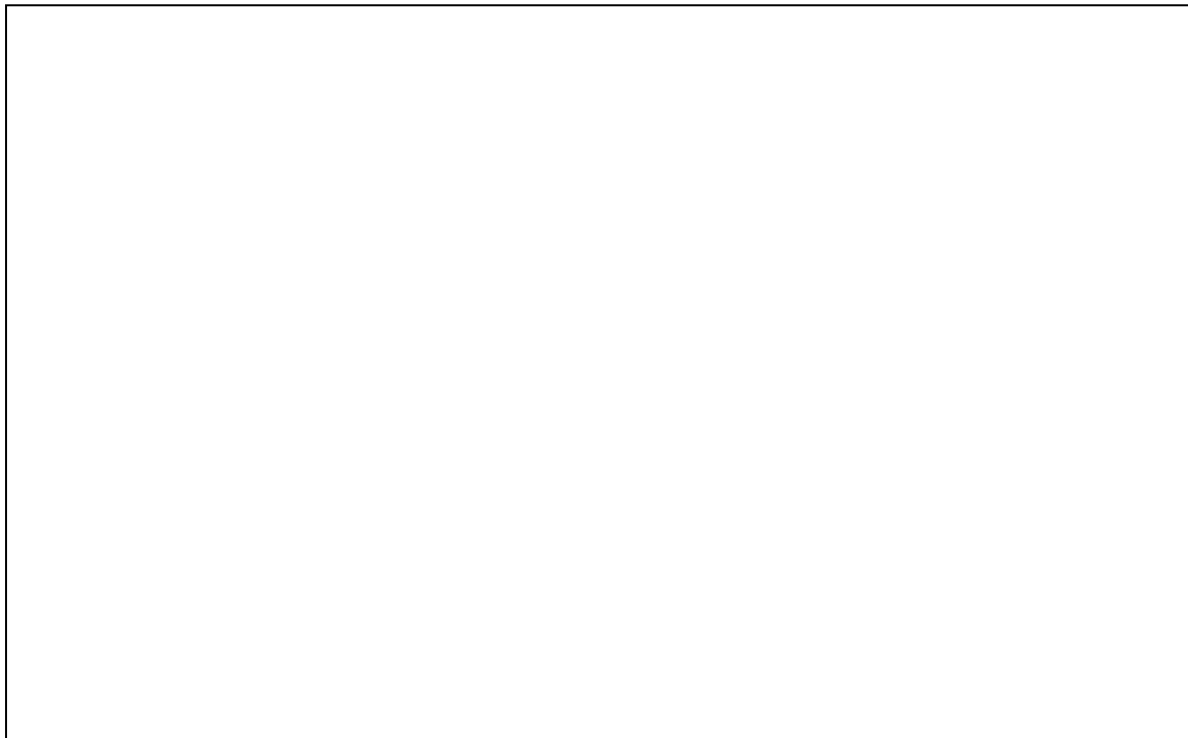
Some physically abusive parents rationalize their behaviour as being discipline and, indeed, the law recognizes that parents can spank their children in some circumstances.

An act which, if directed toward another adult, would be a criminal assault can be excused by the courts if the parent used "reasonable force" for the "correction" of a child.

While experts agree that an effective parent does not have to use corporal punishment, there are individuals who use spanking in a measured and systematic way as the severest consequence, used sparingly when lesser forms of discipline have failed.

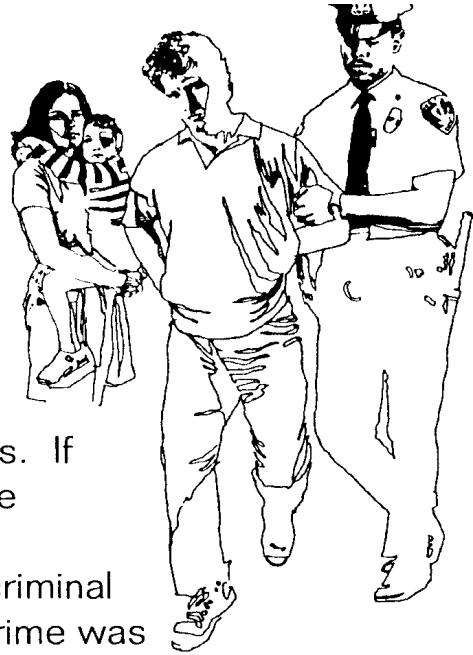
More often however, a parent will use spanking in a sporadic and harmful way, in response to the build up of frustration or as a reflection of the parent's bad mood.

Child protection officials are often called upon to assess when an assault against a child is abusive and when it is discipline. Some of these cases go to court so a judge becomes the arbiter.



## *Charging A Parent With A Crime*

In some areas, the child protection agencies conduct investigations jointly with the police. This is because most forms of child abuse are criminal offences. If the police have “reasonable and probable grounds” to believe that a crime was committed, they may well decide to lay criminal charges. They may also believe that a crime was committed but not lay charges.



This could be because: -

- there is not enough available evidence to secure a conviction in court,
- the actions of the child protection agency are sufficient to keep the child safe from further abuse,
- the alleged offence occurred many years ago,
- the alleged perpetrator was under 12 years of age,
- the alleged perpetrator is already in prison, or
- the child is too young or emotionally fragile to testify in court.

Neglect of children can lead to charges such as child abandonment or failure to provide the necessities of life.

Physical abuse of children typically results in charges of assault, assault with a weapon, assault causing bodily harm or, in extreme cases, attempted murder.

While experts in child development recognize the harm in exposure to emotional abuse and emotional neglect, they are not criminal offences, unless specific threats were uttered.



## *Children In Court*



If criminal charges are laid, the matter will be resolved in court. The accused person can plead guilty and be sentenced, or he can plead not guilty and have a trial. If the case goes to trial, the child or children who were the victims of or witnesses to the offence will probably have to testify, at least once and possibly twice.

This is an experience that few adults look forward to with anything but trepidation.

For children, the thought of testifying, in front of the person who abused them, can be frightening.

In most areas, victim/witness assistance programs exist to help children and other witnesses before during and after they testify. Information on how to find the victim/witnesses assistance program in your community is listed in the section of this book about **Partner Abuse**.

In some parts of the world, there are specialized programs designed to assist children in court. Also depending upon where you live, child witnesses may be able to testify from outside the courtroom using a closed-circuit video system.

## *If You Are An Abused Child*

*"When my father flips out, he bashes me around and throws me into the walls. What can I do?" (14-year-old girl calling Kids Help Phone)*

If you are being abused by a family member, always remember that:

- you are not the only person this is happening to
- it is not your fault
- you have every right to want it to stop
- there are people in your community who can help

The first step is to tell a trusted adult what is happening. The trusted adult you pick could be a neighbour, police officer, doctor, Lecturer or school principal, or one of your friend's parents. Or sometimes it is easier to tell a friend and then give him or her permission to tell an adult.



## *If You Are An Adult Who Was Abused As A Child*



In addition to the legal considerations, however, there are many emotional consequences which should be considered if you want to pursue the case in court. If you have never before disclosed your experiences, prepare yourself for the fallout your disclosure could trigger in your family. Gather an effective support network and consider joining a support group.

It is important to note, however, that child protection authorities should be notified if the family member who abused you as a child has any contact today with children.

## *Some Questions And Answers*

### **1. TO WHAT AGE ARE CHILDREN PROTECTED UNDER CHILD ABUSE LAWS?**

This varies from area to area, but is typically either 14 or 16. Check with the local authorities or ask a lawyer. If the abuse involved a criminal offence, there is no age restriction on when police can become involved.

### **2. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE ALLEGED ABUSER ONCE A REPORT IS MADE?**

If the alleged abuser is charged with a criminal offence, he will almost always be required to stay away from the child during the period before court. If he denies the offence, he can have a trial where the attorney will have to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. If convicted, the penalties range in severity from an absolute discharge through to imprisonment. The judge who chooses the sentence may keep in the mind the desirability of counselling.

If the matter is handled through the child protection system only, the alleged abuser may also be asked to live for a period of time outside the family home, but this is not always the case. It is common that child abusers will be asked to participate in group or individual counselling to address the causes of the behaviour and try and reduce the future risk of abuse for the child or children involved. The family may be supervised by a child protection worker to help them learn non-abusive parenting strategies. This supervision is also undertaken to monitor the safety of the children.

### **3. CAN A PARENT LOSE CUSTODY OF A CHILD BECAUSE OF ABUSE?**

Yes. In extreme cases, child protection authorities will feel that a child is not safe living at home and may use their legal power to remove the child. This is a serious measure and used only when absolutely necessary. More commonly, their efforts are aimed at supporting the parents and keeping the family united. Even when a child is apprehended, the long-term goal is usually family reunification. In some cases, if these efforts fail, the agency will ask a court to terminate parental custody. These children become wards of the state and may be placed for adoption. Termination of parental custody is rare and there has to be good proof that such a move is in the child's best interests. If the child has one abusive parent and one non-offending parent who

do not live together, the two parents may find themselves in a custody battle

Or, they may argue over the frequency and conditions of visits between the non-custodial parent and the children. If they cannot come to an agreement, a court must decide what is in the child's best interests. A mental health assessment may be undertaken in these cases to disentangle the children's interests from the often acrimonious conflict between the parents. If a parent is judged to be a risk to the children, any access visits will probably have to be supervised by a responsible third party. It is extremely rare, but it is possible that a court can terminate permanently the right of an abusive parent to see the child.

#### **4. CAN A CHILD SUE AN ABUSIVE PARENT?**

Yes. In some cases. Although rarely undertaken until the child has reached adulthood, more and more abused children are taking their parents to court to sue for damages. This can be done even if the matter has already been the subject of a criminal trial and even if the outcome of that trial was an acquittal. Only a lawyer who reviews the circumstances of the specific case can determine if civil litigation is feasible. If the matter is pursued, one possible outcome is that the abusive parent could be ordered by the court to pay a specified sum of money to the plaintiff as compensation. There is a time limit on when you can launch such a suit so those contemplating legal action should seek legal advice as soon as possible.

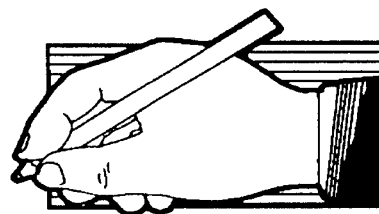
#### **5. ARE ALL CHILDREN AFFECTED IN THE SAME WAY BY CHILD ABUSE?**

No. For example, girls and boys can be affected differently. It is generally observed that boys tend to "act out" with aggression, property destruction etc. while girls "act in" with depression and health problems. Abuse which starts later in life or which is perpetrated by a person outside the nuclear family such as an uncle may be less damaging than abuse which started during infancy and was perpetrated by a parent and there are children who are resilient to the negative effects of child abuse and remain asymptomatic.

#### **6. WILL ALL ABUSED CHILDREN HAVE PROBLEMS AS ADULTS?**

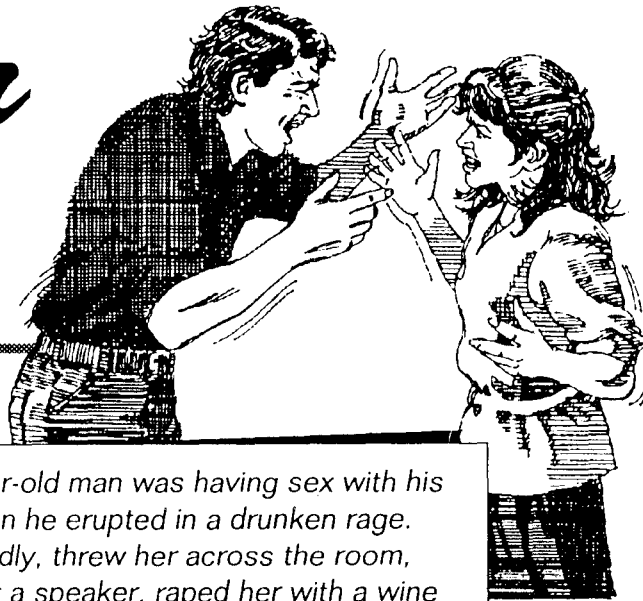
No. Child Abuse is not a mandatory life sentence. Protective factors which buffer a child from some or all of the harmful effects of child abuse include having a stable and supportive adult figure in their lives during childhood (which can include a therapist) and having a good support network as an adult. As adults, they can talk about the abuse and be angry that it happened while clearly attributing the blame to the abuser and not themselves. Intelligent children, those who do well in school or those who have an area of competence (e.g., sports, music) may also fare better in the long run.

*Where To Write For  
More Information*



If a child is being abused or is at risk of abuse, you must report your concerns to the proper authorities without delay, as discussed above. To learn more about child abuse in general, try your local library, public health department, child welfare agency, National Family Services, The Legal Aid Clinic, The Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, Community Police Section, or contact organizations which engage in public education. Some of them will provide lists of publications which can be ordered.

# Partner Abuse



*In the U.S.A. a 20-year-old man was having sex with his common-law wife when he erupted in a drunken rage. He struck her repeatedly, threw her across the room, pushed her up against a speaker, raped her with a wine bottle, and threatened her with a knife.*

Statistics estimates that one million women are sexually or physically assaulted each year. In dark alleys or deserted parking garages? A few, but most of these incidents were perpetrated by a family member, intimate partner or friend.

A woman is at greater risk of violence in her own home than on the street. In fact, three in ten women who are or have been in marital or common-law relationships with men were physically or sexually assaulted at least once by at least one of them. This represents 2.6 million women. One third of them feared for their lives because of the intensity or frequency of the violence and four out of ten received medical attention for injuries.

Think of ten women you know. Is it hard to believe that three of them have been assaulted by a partner? If your answer is "yes" it is partly because crimes in the family are well hidden in most cases.

The abused woman is often embarrassed and reluctant to confide in family, friends or co-workers. She may blame herself, for not being a good enough wife to prevent his rages. She thinks it won't happen again or hopes he will change because he keeps promising to stop drinking or get counselling. And she wants to keep the family together for the sake of the children.

Or she has no other place to go, worries about retaliation by the man should she leave, or is experiencing an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness about her ability to rid her life of violence.

The neighbours may not know, but if there are children in the family, they will likely be aware of the violence, no matter how hard a mother tries to keep it a secret from them.

The consequences of family violence — for women, children and society as a whole — are serious and long-lasting. Women can be affected in ways far beyond physical injury and living with chronic fear: emotional troubles, thoughts of suicide, poor health and difficulty keeping a job, poverty, and substance abuse. Children can carry the legacies of violence over their entire lives and it will probably impact their adult relationships.

Society bears many financial costs because of violence against women: health care, criminal justice interventions, criminal injuries compensation, mental health services, child protection services, and lost productivity in the workplace, in addition to the direct costs of crisis intervention, transitional housing, and counselling of abused women and their children.

A study conducted by the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children estimated the cost of violence against women, borne largely by tax payers, exceeds \$4 billion each year. For example, incarcerating and supervising men convicted of assaulting their partners costs well over \$250 million each year.

Partner abuse goes by many different names: wife battery, spousal abuse, domestic violence, marital rape, or conjugal assault. It occurs in affluent and poor neighbourhoods, in cities and in the country, in both heterosexual and gay or lesbian relationships.

Young women may be at highest risk but partner abuse can continue into the senior years, as discussed in the section of this booklet on Elder Abuse. Educated women are abused and their thoughts and feelings are no different from those who did not finish school. Although far less common, men can be assaulted by their female partners. Disabled women who are abused face added challenges to coming forward and accessing effective assistance.

The information presented below may help you understand more about the experiences of women who are assaulted by men who say they love them.

## *The Continuum Of Abuse*

*"The real damage is to your understanding of yourself as a human being. I believed there was something fundamentally flawed, that I was missing something that other women who weren't being abused had." (personal account told to the Panel on Violence Against Women)*

The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence defines spouse abuse as "an attempt to control the behaviour of a wife, common-law partner or girlfriend. It is a misuse of power which uses the bonds of intimacy, trust and dependency to make the woman unequal, powerless and unsafe."

Severe, repeated violence occurs in one in 14 relationships. But there is a continuum of abuse which ranges from verbal insults through to the repeated infliction of life-threatening injuries and even murder.

The goal, whether intentional or not, is always to give the abuser the upper hand, to use physical, economic or emotional power to be in control and to put the woman in a position of powerlessness. Sometimes this is done with words and sometimes it is done with violence or threats of violence.

One in ten women in a relationship was hit by her male partner last year. But you don't have to be hit to be abused. Partner abuse can be manifested in one, two or all three of these ways:

### EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse can take the form of demeaning comments and insults, such as repeated taunts about being useless, lazy, fat, frigid, ugly, or stupid. It also includes controlling behaviour such as withholding money, dictating how she dresses, threats of suicide, threats of taking the children, surveillance, criticism, baseless jealousy, abusing pets, and destroying sentimental and valued possessions.

### SEXUAL ABUSE

Forcing you to have sex or forcing you to engage in a type of sexual activity you find distasteful or painful is sexual abuse, placing you at risk of AIDS or other sexually-transmitted diseases by refusing to wear a condom is also sexual abuse.

### PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse includes slapping, punching, kicking, shoving, choking, burning, biting, pushing down stairs, stabbing or slashing with a knife, shooting, or hitting with an object. It may or may not result in visible injury.

One quarter of women who are physically assaulted by a partner are also sexually assaulted by him and almost all of them report emotional abuse.

Abuse can be episodic, worse at some times than others, or it can be continual. Abuse can escalate in severity over time. Or a few violent incidents can be followed by years of intimidation and threats which never again manifest themselves in physical assault.

Partner abuse can end with the murder of the woman, even if she has ended the relationship. A woman is nine times more likely to be killed by her spouse than by a stranger. When a woman is killed by a current or former partner, it is a virtual certainty that the murder was preceded by months or years of physical abuse, only sometimes known to the police.

In 1995, 21 men were killed by their wives while 69 women were killed by their husbands or ex spouses. Many of the women who killed male partners were acting in self-defense or while protecting their children.

Risk of being murdered is higher in common-law than married unions, higher if there is a wide disparity in the ages of the couple, and higher for younger women.



## *Some Warning Signs In A Relationship*

*According to the Violence Against Women Survey, a relatively small proportion of assaulted women (less than 1 in 5) said that the man was violent during the time they were dating. For the majority, the violence began after they had married or moved in together, once strong emotional bonds had been established. (Holly Johnson, "Dangerous Domains")*

Abusive behaviour may not start in the early stages of a relationship. In fact, abusive men can be extremely attentive and affectionate and may even put the woman "on a pedestal." They may be inordinately dependent and needy, making statements like they could not continue living if the woman ever left, or they can be remote and brooding. If there is going to be violence in a relationship, it often starts when the woman is pregnant. One in five women who are physically assaulted when pregnant will suffer a miscarriage.

Some women report that there were no warning signs. It is hard to generalize, but there are some characteristics shared by many abusive men. Some of them can be warning signals of violence in the future, especially if many are present. It is easier to predict which men will be violent than to predict which women will find themselves in an abusive relationship.

**HISTORY:** A man is at higher risk than average of being violent to a partner if:

- His father was violent towards his mother
- He has been abusive to a previous partner and has not undergone counselling focused specifically on male battering.

**ATTITUDES:** Abusive men may think that abuse is okay, that it is a perfectly acceptable way to resolve problems or deal with stress and frustration. Abusive men often hold generally negative attitudes toward women. A man is at higher risk than average of being violent to a partner if:

- He believes that the man should be the boss
- He believes that hitting a woman can be appropriate in some circumstances
- He has friends who support the view that a man should be the boss and believe that slapping a woman to keep her in line is appropriate

Having a social network of family members and peers who condone or encourage his attitudes means both that the man will gain status from partner abuse and that he can continue to view his behaviour as acceptable and normal.

**BEHAVIOURS:** In the early stages of a relationship, some behaviour can be warning signs of violence in the future. A man is at higher risk than average of being violent to a partner if he demonstrates a pattern of these behaviours:

- **Control:** Partner abuse may first be manifested by attempts to control the woman's life as with the need to know where she is every minute of the day or whom she is with. It can also include possessiveness and baseless jealousy.



- **Fostering social isolation:** An abusive man may discourage his partner's contacts with friends and family. Over time, he can cut her off from her entire social support network.
- **Emotional abuse:** A physically abusive man is usually emotionally abusive as well but the emotional abuse will probably start first.
- **Poor communication skills:** Men who cannot talk out their problems or identify their feelings with words may react to stress and frustration with abusive outbursts.
- **Externalizing blame:** If everything is someone else's fault and the man is not able to accept responsibility for his own wrongdoing, he can easily rationalize any violence as being justified and fail to see himself as being at fault.
- **Quick temper:** Also sometimes called a "short fuse," men who anger quickly and in situations which do not anger others may be more prone to partner abuse.

Abusive men may have problems in other facets of their lives:

difficulty holding a job,  
drinking too much, or  
involvement in crime.

Statistically speaking, they are likely to be young, unemployed, not financially well off, and living common-law with the woman. But abusive men can be university graduates, successful in their professions, sober, and respected members of their places of worship. Violent men are often charming and popular outside the home.

If you are reading this booklet and your first thought was that you must hide it from your partner, you might be ready to label what is happening to you as abusive.

## *Power And Control*

*"When you hear you're stupid, you're ugly, things like that often enough, you begin to believe it. Then you start to question everything you do."*

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project provides counselling to men who abuse their partners. They developed a list of ways men exercise power and control over partners which can lead to or co exist with violence. Violence is a means not an end. It is one way a man can achieve and maintain power over and control of the woman. The use of these techniques, whether conscious or not, has the end result of isolating the woman, keeping her focused on him, and depleting her inner resources.

### **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Putting her down, making her feel bad about herself, calling her names, making her think she is crazy, playing mind games, humiliating her, making her feel guilty, etc. The opposite is **RESPECT**: listening non-judgmentally, being emotionally affirming and understanding, valuing her opinions.

### **INTIMIDATION**

Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures, smashing things, destroying her property, abusing pets, displaying weapons, etc. The opposite is **NON-THREATENING BEHAVIOUR**: talking and acting so that she feels safe and comfortable expressing herself and doing things.

### **COERCION AND THREATS**

Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her, threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare, making her withdraw cooperation with criminal



prosecutions against him, making her do illegal things, etc. The opposite is NEGOTIATION AND FAIRNESS: seeking mutually satisfying resolutions to conflict, accepting change and being willing to compromise.

#### **ECONOMIC ABUSE**

Preventing her from getting money or keeping a job, making her ask for money, giving her an allowance, taking her money, not letting her know about or have access to family finances, etc. The opposite is ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP: making money decisions together, making sure both partners benefit from financial arrangements.

#### **USING MALE PRIVILEGE**

Treating her like a servant, making all the big decisions, acting like the “master of the castle,” being the one to define men’s and women’s role. The opposite is SHARED RESPONSIBILITY, mutually agreeing on a fair distribution of work, making family decisions together.

#### **USING CHILDREN**

Making her feel guilty about the children, using the children to relay messages, using visitation to harass her, threatening to take the children away, etc. The opposite is RESPONSIBLE PARENTING: sharing parental responsibilities, being a positive nonviolent role model for the children.

#### **MINIMIZING, DENYING, BLAMING**

Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously, saying the abuse did not happen, shifting responsibility for abusive behaviour, saying she caused it, etc. The opposite is HONESTY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: accepting responsibility for self, acknowledging past use of violence, admitting being wrong, communicating openly and truthfully.

#### **USING ISOLATION**

Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes, limiting her outside involvement, using jealousy to justify actions, etc. The opposite is TRUST AND SUPPORT: supporting her goals in life, respecting her right to her own feelings, friend’s activities and opinions.

Some women find these categories helpful to put labels on their feelings and experiences.

## ***Why It Happens***

*A 27-year-old unemployed father took just 37 days to get re-arrested and charged with beating up his wife again. In his second round of charges he was accused of violently pushing his wife into some cupboards, throwing her to the ground and then threatening to kill her with a piece of broken glass.*

If you asked this man for an explanation, he might say that it was her fault: she provoked him by nagging, complained about something, or insulted him. He might also focus on the situation, he was drunk, he was under stress because he lost his job, or the children were being noisy. Abusive men often excuse their actions by blaming the woman or citing situational factors. Abused women can respond by trying not to complain, worrying when he drinks, or panicking if the children make noise.

But the underlying cause of partner abuse is the man's need to control. This can be paired with an unwavering belief that he has the right to do so because of male privilege. Efforts by the women to be independent or challenge his authority may be matched with an escalation of the violence. He may have learned these attitudes during his childhood, perhaps by seeing his father abuse his mother, but it is orientation that is continually reinforced for him by the media, his friends, family, role models such as celebrities or sports figures, and even the law. Recognizing the power and control dynamic, you can see that violence is not solely a problem of dysfunctional families or a reaction to stress.

#### **SOCIALIZATION OF GIRLS**

Despite decades of effort to eliminate stereotypes of male and female roles, most little girls are still socialized to be nurturing, supportive, non-confrontational, and to put the needs of others over their own. Girls are exposed to messages that being male are better, women who have a man are better than women who do not, and women without a man should be pitied. In other words, women are taught to pacify, try and resolve conflict, defer to male authority (fathers, boy friends, husbands), and see a relationship as a necessary and valued commodity.

#### **IMAGES OF MASCULINITY AND THE ROLE OF MEN**

Little boys are socialized in quite a different way. It starts when they are babies and continues at school. Male aggression in the school yard is excused as healthy, for example. Boys are taught that being powerful and in control are good, thinking is better than feeling, and expressing feelings is bad. As adults, they may have difficulty appreciating the viewpoint of others. They may come to believe the man is the head of the household, a man should make more money than his wife, and his opinions are more important and so she should be submissive to his authority. A man can be threatened and feel vulnerable if he doubts if any of these sentiments applies to him.

#### **VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIA**

Stereotypes of male and female roles are repeated endlessly in movies and on television. They confirm the stereotype of men as aggressive and in control and the stereotypes of women as passive, submissive, sexually available, and eager to cater to the needs of men. Moreover, the multitude of media portrayals of violence against women are presented as normal, deserved and executed without consequence.

#### **SOCIETAL ATTITUDES CONDONING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Looking at portrayals of women in films and on television shows that we collectively see women as legitimate targets of violence. Surveys of average people lead us to the same conclusion. A high proportion of the population believes that there are circumstances when a man is justified in hitting a woman.

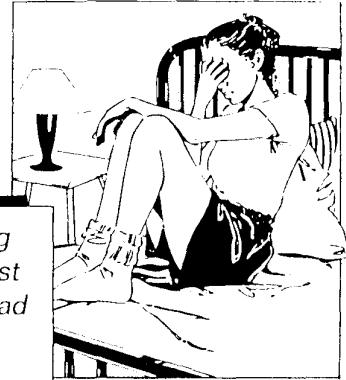
#### **IN EQUALITY OF WOMEN**

The Panel on Violence Against Women recognized all these factors and concluded that violence against women was "the consequence of social, economic and political inequality" of women. Women earn less money than men, their work is valued less and they do not have the same access to those who make the political decisions. Hitting your wife was once condoned by the law and, more recently; it has been seen as a private matter that should not involve the police. Abused women who sought help from authorities were often met with such comments as: "what did you do to make your husband so angry?" Society has taken violence against women seriously only in the last few years and that was because women worked extremely hard to place the issue on the national agenda.

We have violence in our society because we tolerate having violence in our society. The Panel on Violence Against Women recommended a Zero Tolerance Policy for violence.

## *Children Who Witness Partner Abuse*

*"One of the earliest experiences I remember is sleeping with my mother, and being thrown out of the bed against the wall while my mother was raped. That's how she had every one of us. I felt that the abuse was my fault, if I only did things better."*



In a high percentage of families where there is partner abuse — much as 80% — the children witness violence against their mothers. Even if they do not see the abuse, chances are high that they know what is happening. And it is almost a certainty that the periods between the violent episodes which punctuate their lives will be filled with verbal abuse, threats and denigration of their mothers. Hundreds of thousands of children are exposed to violence and abuse in their homes and most will experience problems as a result, such as:

### **EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS**

Children who are exposed to the abuse of their mothers can suffer from depression, anxiety, and anger. Symptoms may include nightmares, bedwetting, aggression and temper outbursts, irritability, moodiness, withdrawal from social activities, thoughts of suicide, and low self-esteem.

### **BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS**

Children who are exposed to the abuse of their mothers, especially boys, may exhibit problem behaviours such as fighting with or bullying peers, non-compliance with adults, disrespect for authority figures such as teachers, or conduct disorders.

### **SCHOOL PROBLEMS**

Children who are exposed to the abuse of their mothers may exhibit poor school performance or school avoidance. They may want to stay home to protect their mother or have difficulty concentrating on their work. The home environment may not be conducive to doing homework and they can suffer chronically from lack of sleep because of the violence.

### **HEALTH PROBLEMS**

Children who are exposed to the abuse of their mothers may suffer from a higher rate of medical problems, as well as somatic symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches which have no medical cause. Babies may be excessively anxious and have problems sleeping or keeping food down. Abuse can affect the rate of growth of children. Children from violent homes have been found to be shorter.

### **INTERGENERATIONAL VIOLENCE**

Boys who watch their mothers emotionally and physically abused may grow up to feel that all women should be treated that way. Girls may grow up to accept abuse in their lives with no appreciation of why life does not have to be that way. In other words, children who are exposed to violence in their homes are vulnerable to repeating the patterns modeled for them by their parents.

## CRIMINALITY

Studies have shown that boys (and perhaps girls as well) who are exposed to family violence have an increased chance of involvement with the criminal justice system.

These consequences are found with children exposed to violence in their homes, regardless of whether they personally witnessed their mothers being assaulted. It should also be noted, however, that some children exposed to violence will appear to be 'perfect,' achieving high grades and excelling in sports or other activities. This is, in part, an expression of their futile hope that being a perfect child will stop the abuse at home.

Family violence is confusing for children. They love their father but are afraid of him and afraid for their mother's safety. They love their mother but don't understand why she cannot protect herself or them from harm. They rarely bring friends home. They learn to keep the family secrets and to see themselves as different from their school mates. Especially as they enter adolescence, the children may lose respect for the mother and resist her parental authority. Children from violent families often leave home at an early age. Surveys of homeless street youth often find high rates of family violence in their histories.

## *Child Abuse In Violent Families*

*Police say he juggled his 3-month-old baby in the air, then swung the infant by the arm over his head, slapped his 2-year-old daughter in the face, and struck his terrified wife in the back before she fled with the children.*

It may not start right away, but partner abuse can escalate into child abuse as well. Estimates vary, but in 25% to 36% of families where the woman is assaulted, the children will also be physically abused by fathers, step-fathers or their mothers' boyfriends. Some research has shown that it is those abusive men who cause serious injury to their wives who are most likely to abuse the children. The more frequent the violent incidents against the mother, the more likely the children will be abused. A study reported in a 1996 issue of the scholarly journal *Child Abuse and Neglect* suggested that a man who has assaulted his wife at least 50 times will almost certainly assault the children as well. It has also been found that some physically abusive men assault the children on purpose to coerce reluctant mothers into compliance with their demands. Physically abusive men can also sexually abuse the children, usually the girls but sometimes the boys or both.

## *Obstacles To Leaving*

*"My husband struck me on our honeymoon. He killed our first child by kicking the four-month-old fetus out of the uterus. My doctor asked me what I had done to make him so mad, our Anglican minister reminded me that I had married for better or worse, the lawyer wanted to know where I would get the money to pay the legal fees, and my mother told him where I was hiding."*

Why does she stay? This is perhaps the most frequently asked question in the area of partner violence. But there is no straight forward answer. There was a time when women were told by their mothers that leaving is the easy way out of a bad marriage. Stick it out and try to make things better. Where partner abuse is concerned, however, leaving is harder than most people imagine and it usually is harder than staying. For example, separation is the most dangerous period for an abused woman, when she is at highest risk for serious injury or even murder.

Most women say that if a partner ever hit them, they would take action immediately by leaving or ejecting him from the home. There are, undoubtedly, some cases where this happens. But an act of physical violence like that typically occurs after the woman has become emotionally invested in the relationship and against a backdrop of emotional abuse. A woman's self-esteem can fall as she internalizes the negatives messages about herself from the emotional abuse. I don't deserve to be happy. I will never be happy. The abuse is my fault. Any action she takes can be met with disapproval from the man: "the floor is never clean," "you clean the floor too often." Low self-esteem combined with this "damned if I do, damned if I don't" feeling can work against the likelihood that the woman will be able to take action. In other words, an abused woman is, by definition, affected by the consequences of partner abuse. This includes not only low self-esteem but also social isolation, anxiety, feelings of depression and worthlessness, health problems, and a profound sense of powerlessness to control her life. She is in a Catch-22: the consequences of abuse make it difficult to escape the consequences of abuse. She may drink too much or use other harmful coping strategies, have difficulty trusting people and even have problems keeping a job because of absenteeism. Without a job or the confidence that she can get one, she may be financially dependent on the abusive partner to feed and clothe her children. The best predictors of which women will remain in an abusive relationship are financial dependence, poor self-concept, and a history of witnessing violence in her family when young.

The many obstacles to leaving break down into three categories: HOPE, SHAME and FEAR. By the time her partner displays the first use of physical violence, the woman will probably have developed a deep sense of commitment to the relationship, fashioned a comfortable home, and had or be expecting children. In other words, there are emotional, familial and economic bonds that she will not sever lightly. There can be a period of optimism that the situation will change for the better. The woman may recognize negative aspects to the relationship but feels that the good outweighs the bad. She HOPES he will change, or she herself will change, or their situation will change and the abuse will stop.

#### THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Some women remain optimistic about change because the violence they experience is part of a cycle. In their cases, a violent episode is followed soon after by his apology, admission of wrong doing, and promises that it will never happen again. This is sometimes called the "honeymoon phase." Based on his assurances, the woman HOPES it will not happen again and may keep the incident a secret. She may even spend a period of time in a shelter or transition house and decide to reconcile.

#### LOW SELF ESTEEM

A woman can mistakenly feel that the violence is being caused or triggered by her own actions. It would stop if only she lost weight, spent less money, or kept the house tidier. The effects of emotional abuse can be such that she readily sees herself as unlovable, worthless and deserving of abuse. Therefore, she HOPES the situation will improve if she herself improves.

#### BELIEF THAT THE CHILDREN NEED A FATHER AND ARE NOT AFFECTED



There are powerful messages in our society that children are better off in a two-parent home. Some women are willing to tolerate abusive behaviour for this reason. They may go to great lengths to conceal bruises from the children lest they lose respect for their father. She may compensate for his shortcomings as a parent by overly indulging the children. She HOPES that her children will benefit from having a father and not be affected in a negative way by the abuse she herself experiences.

#### SEEING THE PROBLEM AS ALCOHOLISM

As many as one third of abused women cite his alcohol use as the factor triggering most or all incidents. As researcher Holly Johnson, observed in her book *Dangerous Domains*, however, “alcohol provides battered women, who are desperate to understand why their partners hurt them the way they do, with an explanation for their husband’s behaviour. It gives them HOPE that, if only the man would stop drinking, the violence would also stop.”

A woman who is hoping for change may be protective of her partner, denying abuse, dismissing the concerns of others for her safety, or down playing the seriousness of the abuse, a technique called minimization. She may focus exclusively on the positive features of the man, or provide excuses to justify his behaviour to others. She may even misinterpret jealousy, possessiveness and control as indicators of his love for her.

Hope often fades. There can indeed be a violence-free period after an assault, but chances are that it will happen again. Some women report that the periods between the violent episodes get shorter over time. No matter what they do, they cannot control or stop the rages. Women who believe that the children are not affected may learn otherwise, as when a teenaged son assaults his mother or the school refers the children for counselling. The man may well stop drinking but the violence continues.

Although less true today than ever before, being abused by a partner is something many women are ashamed of and have difficulty admitting. Even after she labels her experiences as abusive, the SHAME may prevent her from publicly acknowledging her situation. She may feel it is her fault, for not being a better person or otherwise causing the abuse. Choruses of “I told you so” ring in her ears as she expects recriminations from the family over picking the wrong man. She may anticipate that her family will not be supportive or helpful when she tells them and she may not be aware of the services in her community where she can go for support and assistance.

Members of some ethnic communities may be especially ashamed of coming forward because of the embarrassment it could cause for themselves, the family and the community. Talking about personal problems with strangers can be an intensely difficult experience. They may also experience language barriers to reporting or bring distrust and fear of the police from their countries of origin.

The immediate consequence of being ashamed about the abuse is that the woman isolates herself and has no one to talk to or reach out to for help. This self-imposed isolation may be compounded by the abusive man’s attempts to cut her off from her family and social network. She has no opportunity to hear from others the messages that might overcome her shame: abuse is wrong, it is not her fault, it need not be tolerated, and there is help available. Social isolation also increases her dependence on the abusive partner and lowers her self-esteem even further.

The third category of factors which work to prevent women from terminating violent relationships involves FEAR of the consequences.

#### FEAR OF DISBELIEF

This is especially likely when the man presents an image to the community of being respectable, happy-go-lucky, or law-abiding such as when he is an esteemed member of the church or a successful businessman. Wives of police officers may feel it is unlikely any report they make to the police will be believed. Those in abusive gay or lesbian relationships may also worry that their situation will not be understood.

#### **FEAR OF POVERTY FOR THE CHILDREN**

Especially if the woman is financially dependent on the abusive partner, but also true in other cases, she may dread the consequences of a lowered standard of living for herself and her children. The need to move to cheaper accommodation will probably necessitate a change of schools for the children, a disruption at a time the children would benefit most from stability. Well over half of single mothers live in poverty. Social assistance is unlikely to keep a family above the poverty line, nor will a minimum wage job.

#### **FEAR OF REPRISAL**

An abused woman may have good reason to believe that any attempt to end the relationship will be met with reprisal. Her partner may have told her this on many occasions: if I can't have you, no one can; if you leave me I will kill you; if you leave me I will kill your parents; if you leave me I will kill the children. If she has tried to leave before, she may already have experienced an escalation in the violence and may, ironically, have reconciled in an effort to be safer.

#### **FEAR OF LOSING CUSTODY OF THE CHILDREN**

Again, this concern can be the result of the man's repeated messages about the consequences of leaving. It can and does happen that men with determination or endless financial means can battle in the courts for years and perhaps be successful. In these cases, the man is using the custody battle as a means of power and control. Some men threaten to report the woman as an unfit mother to child protection authorities and she may worry that her children will be apprehended from her.

#### **FEAR FOR THE CHILDREN'S SAFETY ON ACCESS VISITS**

If a man is abusive to her children, a woman may feel that her ability to protect them is better if she stays in the relationship so she can supervise his contact with the children.

#### **FEAR OF OFFENDING RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES**

Some religions prohibit divorce or prevent women from being the party who requests it. Even those who are not religious are exposed to messages such as marriage vows are forever, till death do us part, etc.

#### **FEAR OF BRINGING SHAME ON CULTURAL COMMUNITY**

Some women can find safety and sanctuary within the protective bonds of their cultural community. Those who are being abused, however, may be deterred from leaving for fear of offending culturally-prescribed norms of feminine behaviour or challenging male authority.

The Violence Against Women Survey found that 70% of women in violent relationships left at least once and returned. The most common reasons given for reconciliation were "for the sake of the children" (31 %), to give the relationship another try (24%), the man had promised to change (17%) and a lack of financial resources and options (9%). Women's groups have been critical of recent cuts to social assistance benefits in part because they mean more women are going back to, or staying in, abusive relationships because of financial dependency.

Studies show that abuse continues after separation in about one in five cases, taking the form of assaults, rape, stalking, misuse of joint credit, or breaking and entering her new residence. Where abuse continues after separation, it escalates in severity in one third of cases. A



woman's chance of being murdered by an ex-spouse is six times greater than murder by a spouse with whom she is living. In 1995, statistics reported that 23% of legally-married women killed by their husbands were separated at the time.

## *If You Are Abused: Where To Call For Assistance*

*He decides to treat you the way he does. It's his choice. He has to take responsibility for his behaviour. If you refuse to let him treat you badly, it doesn't mean you don't love him. (Advisory Council on the Status of Women - U.S.A.)*

Remember, if you are in an abusive relationship:

- you are not alone
- it is not your fault
- nothing you do or say ever gives anyone the right to abuse you
- you have the right to feel safe
- you can make it stop
- it is okay to ask for help

There are people in most communities who can help you sort out your options, protect yourself from further abuse, provide transitional and second-stage housing and help you with legal matters.

In an emergency situation, call the police. They have the authority to arrest your partner and it should be he who leaves the home rather than you and your children. If you must leave quickly to maintain your safety, however, you should do so. If you do not have friends and family members with whom you can stay, there is probably a shelter, transition house or safe house in your area. If you feel you might one day be in need of such a place, it is best to investigate the local options right away, just in case.

There are over 40 transition houses and shelters across the country. Look on page 1 of your local telephone directory to find emergency numbers such as the abused women's helpline or the crisis line in your area. They can direct you to the shelter or service closest to where you are.

Most shelters or transition houses have programs or services for children who have been exposed to partner abuse. They typically offer support groups or advocacy for non-residents or former residents, or can refer you to an agency that does.

## *Calling The Police*

Most forms of partner abuse are criminal offences: assault, sexual assault, intimidation,



stalking (called criminal harassment), forcible confinement, threats, etc. It is your right to call the police if you are the victim of a crime. Talk to the staff at your local shelter or abused women's support agency to learn about the advantages and disadvantages of calling the police. When the police lay charges or arrest abusive men, the probability of new incidents of violence is reduced to half.

If you watch American television programs, you might believe that it is up to the complainant to decide if charges will be laid. In the case of partner abuse, that did indeed used to be true. It no longer is. The police decide when charges are justified. If you call the police, and they have a "reasonable" belief that a crime was committed, they are supposed to lay charges. If they arrest your partner, however, do not expect that he will be held in custody for more than 24 hours (although there is a remote possibility in some cases, particularly if he has outstanding warrants). Ask the police to notify you of his release or at least to estimate how long it will be before he is released.

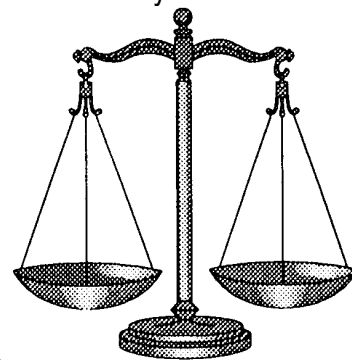
## *Victim/Witness Assistance*

If charges are laid and your partner pleads not guilty, the case will go to trial. This means you will probably have to testify. Services are available in most parts to help victims and witnesses who are expected to testify in court. Priority is given to partner abuse and child abuse cases. You will find that the victim service workers understand how difficult it is to testify in court. They will explain the legal process, provide moral support and debriefing about testifying, and can refer you to agencies in your communities for counselling, legal advice or housing.

There are too many victim service agencies to mention in this little book. Ask at your local police department or courthouse to be directed to the program closest to you.

## *Other Legal Options*

There are some other legal options available to women abused by their partners, especially if they have left and are being harassed, stalked or continue to fear retaliation. They all can be difficult to enforce.



Because their effectiveness in keeping you safe is not guaranteed and you should still engage in safety planning, as discussed below. And none of these options is suited to crisis intervention in an emergency.

### **PEACE BONDS**

If you have "reasonable grounds" to fear an ex-partner will cause "personal injury" to you or your child, you can apply for a peace bond under s. 810 of the Criminal Code. The person named in the order must "keep the peace and be of good behaviour" and agree to abide by conditions set by the judge (e.g., stay a certain radius away or not possess firearms). Violating a condition is a criminal offence and your partner may be charged if the police learn of his actions. Consult the police or your local women's advocacy agency to learn how to apply for a peace bond.

If you get a peace bond, keep the documentation readily available to show the police if you have to report a breach of the conditions (although the existence of a peace bond should be recorded in their computer systems).

#### **RESTRAINING ORDER**

Where a spouse or parent poses a risk to the family, a civil restraining order may be granted by a Family Court. This is most commonly done when the parties are already involved with the Family Court because of a divorce petition or a custody or access dispute. You will need a lawyer to get a civil restraining order but you might be able to qualify for legal aid or use a legal clinic.

If you get a restraining order, keep the documentation readily available in case you have to call the police. The existence of such an order will probably not be registered in their computer systems unless your lawyer tells them about the order.

#### **PRE-COURT CONDITIONS OF NON-ASSOCIATION**

One of the advantages of having charges laid is that, until the court case is over, there will be legal restrictions on your partners contact with you or any person who might be a trial witness. (He might be remanded in custody, but this is rare.) Ask the police what his "bail" conditions are and find out what to do if he violates them. In some cases, violating a release condition is itself a criminal offence. Committing a new offence while on "bail" may be grounds to have his bail revoked.

#### **ENFORCEMENT OF POST-COURT NO-CONTACT RESTRICTIONS**

After court, if your ex-partner has been imprisoned or placed on probation, there may well be legal restrictions placed on his contact with you as part of his conditions of any temporary absence (i.e., pass from prison), parole or probation. If he breaches that restriction, call the police so they can report it to the proper authorities or tell you how to do so. Breaching a probation condition is itself a criminal offence. Breaching a condition or parole can mean that his parole will be ended.

Remember, if you feel you are in danger, legal protections such as these may not be enough. You should also develop a safety plan.

## ***Safety Planning***

*"I have this feeling, I'm sure, that I'm going to be one of the women that you read about in the newspaper after she's murdered."*

Your local women's shelter or advocacy group can help you devise a safety plan for what to do and where to go if you are in danger or have to leave home quickly. This is a sensible course of action for women both before and after separation. Your plan should involve taking the children if at all possible if you have to leave your residence in a hurry. Depending upon their ages and understanding of the situation, you should consider telling your children about the specific aspects of the plan.

Decide in advance the options you have for places to stay (relative, neighbour, friend, motel, shelter). Other aspects of your safety plan might include these:

#### **PLAN ESCAPE ROUTES OUT OF YOUR RESIDENCE**

As you should do as a precaution in case of a fire in your residence, know how to leave if access to the door is blocked.

**KEEP THE CAR READY IN CASE OF EMERGENCY**

Make sure the car always has gas and is in good repair. Hide a set of car keys somewhere outside in case you have to leave in a hurry.

**KEEP SOME MONEY HIDDEN**

Have enough money on hand to pay for a taxi and any immediate expenses you might be able to anticipate.

**PACK AN EMERGENCY BAG**

Have a bag ready in case you need to leave quickly. This would contain personal care items and a change of clothes, toys and valued items for the children, any medication, as well as identification, health card numbers, and important papers (especially court papers regarding custody of the children, birth certificates, peace bonds or a restraining order). Try and get the children's passports if you worry he might take them out of the country. You can leave the bag with a neighbour or friend if it is not safe to keep at home.

**AGREE UPON A CODE WORD WITH A TRUSTED FRIEND OR RELATIVE**

Use of this code word in a telephone conversation will alert your confidant of trouble and that you need assistance or the police.

**KEEP EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS ACCESSIBLE**

Have emergency numbers posted near each telephone so you or your children can dial them in a hurry. If your telephone is so equipped, program emergency numbers into the speed dialer. Teach the children how to use this feature as well.

## *Some Questions And Answers*

**AREN'T MEN EVER ABUSED BY FEMALE PARTNERS?**

Yes. Many men who claim to be abused are really batterers who are assaulted by women as they defend themselves and their children. Seeing the woman as the aggressor is one way they rationalize their assaultive behaviour. However, it is estimated that the victim is a man in about ten percent of partner abuse cases. "Husband battering" may seem to be a rare phenomenon because men are reluctant to come forward and acknowledge a violent relationship. They may also be less in need of assistance and so go unnoticed by social service agencies, or less likely to be injured and present themselves for treatment at hospitals. But there is good reason to believe that men experience partner abuse at a far lower rate than women. Not only are men physically bigger than women, but women are rarely socialized to use power and control in interpersonal relationships.

Even when they are abused, men are generally in a better position, socially and economically, to leave a relationship. They are more likely to be employed and probably have a higher annual salary than their female partners. Studies of divorce show that the standard of living of the male partner usually rises after separation. Nevertheless, men who are abused by female partners should feel able to get assistance and there are a growing number of men's groups which are filling this void.

**CAN ABUSIVE MEN BENEFIT FROM COUNSELLING?**

Yes. There are many treatment programs for abusive men, well over 1 00 and the number is growing. Some are better than others and some men benefit more than others. It is clear that men gain little or no insight from repeated incarceration so counselling may i.e. the best option. Unfortunately, many men enter treatment because they are forced to by the courts. Success is

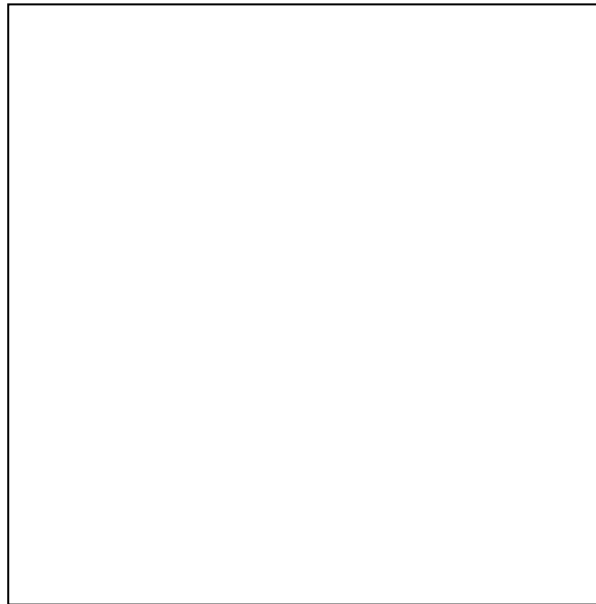
more likely when the man has realized that his attitudes and behaviour are a problem and sincerely wants to learn new ways of relating to women.

Programs which examine the underlying power and control dynamic of partner abuse may well be more effective than those which focus solely on anger management or substance abuse. Abusive men must learn to verbalize their frustrations rather than act them out in rages. They have to accept the responsibility for their own mistakes and be accountable for their behaviour.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT A FRIEND IS BEING ABUSED?**

Abused women are often cut off from social supports and have poor self-esteem. Encourage her to see you as an understanding friend and counteract the negative messages she hears at home by helping her to feel better about herself. If she is able to tell you about what is happening, recognize how difficult that was for her. Be a good listener and be prepared that any changes she makes in her life will probably not happen quickly. Don't judge her and don't blame her or tell her what she has to do. Reinforce that she is not to blame, does not deserve the abuse, and can find people who will help. Find the telephone numbers of local support resources and help her to generate options and to identify the advantages and disadvantages of each.

If you have any reason to feel that her children are at risk for abuse, you must contact the local child protection agency (as discussed in the section of this booklet on Child Abuse).



# Elder Abuse

"Families will come into emergency with an elderly person and say 'I will not take this person home.' And that's it, they walk out the door. Or it's 'I'm just going to park the car' — and you never see them again."  
(Hospital Social Worker - U.S.A.)



For most people, retirement is eagerly-anticipated, an enjoyable time of life when they are free to travel, indulge neglected interests, and spoil grandchildren. For others, the senior years are a time of dependency, depression, chronic illness, isolation and poverty. These factors can leave the elderly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse or make it more difficult for them to access assistance.

Elder abuse is hidden from view, behind closed doors. In a 1992 issue of the *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect*, Professor Podnieks of the Ryerson School of Nursing reported the results of a national survey. She and her colleagues estimated that almost 100,000 seniors living at home had been abused in one of four ways since turning 65. Specifically, they had been financially exploited, emotionally abused, physically abused, or neglected. That figure represents 4% of seniors: one in every 25 people who are 65 and older.

Seniors can be abused by spouses, adult children, other relatives, neighbours, paid caregivers, or unscrupulous business people. A 1995 analysis of 542 cases of elder abuse found that a son was the most common perpetrator of elder abuse (27%), followed by spouses (24%) and daughters (11%). Elder abuse occurs in all areas of the country, both in cities and in rural areas. Unlike partner abuse, it affects men and women equally. Many incidents — perhaps most — go unreported.

By the turn of the century, there will be 3.5 million who are 65 years of age or older, in Canada, one in every ten people. Moreover, 1.5 million will be 75 and over, and two thirds of them will be women. These figures reflect a dramatic increase in both the number of seniors and their relative proportion in the general population, increases which will continue well into the 21st century. As the number of seniors in the population rises, so too will the need to address elder abuse.



## *Financial Exploitation*

*The woman's alcoholic daughter called to tell [hospital] staff not to pay attention to anything she said because "she just likes making a fuss." "She kept insisting her mother had to be let out by Friday. This was really important to her. Then we realized that was when the pension cheque came in." (Geriatric Social Worker)*

A person financially exploits or abuses a senior citizen when they illegally or inappropriately use a person's resources for their own profit or advantage. Seniors may be pressured to relinquish control over finances, sign over power of attorney, hand over money, sign over ownership of a house or cottage, sell property or possessions at reduced value, or include the abuser in a will. This pressure may take the form of threats of institutionalization or withdrawal of care or attention. Their money or property may simply be stolen or their own money may be withheld from them. Some seniors are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous trade's people and sales people who charge exorbitant rates for goods or services or convince them to purchase goods and services which are not needed.

Professor Podnieks's survey suggested that financial exploitation was the most common type of elder abuse, affecting 60,000 people, or 2.5% of seniors who live at home. Victims were equally divided between males and females. About one third of respondents who acknowledged being the victims of financial exploitation identified the perpetrator as an adult son or daughter. About one quarter was other relatives, such as nieces, nephews or grandchildren. Victims of financial exploitation are often widows who live alone.

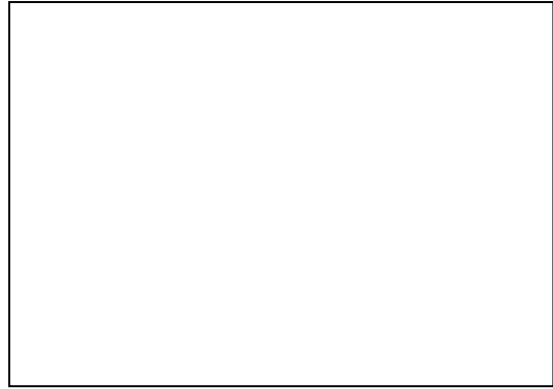
## *Emotional Abuse*

*"Many of the ladies have had disturbed marriages and the children may be a reflection of that. The kids seem not to be fully functioning adults. But still you hear, 'I'd rather see my daughter even though she's always yelling at me'." (Geriatric Social Worker)*

Any course of action producing mental or emotional distress can be emotional or psychological abuse. Emotional abuse can involve verbal assaults in the form of humiliation, intimidation, or infantilization (treating the senior like a child). Repeated threats of placement in a nursing home, isolation or denial of care can also be abusive, as can mental cruelty, deprivation of attention or affection, or inappropriate control over an individual's choices and the right to make decisions.

Professor Pocinieks estimated that 34,000 seniors, 1.4% of the senior population, are sworn at, insulted or threatened at least ten times a year. Those who reported such abuse were equally likely to be men or women and the abuser was likely a spouse. Victims are often married to the abuser or living with an adult child and they tend to blame themselves for the abuse.





## *Physical Abuse*

*She was married for 50 years to a verbally abusive man who expressed controlling behaviour toward the family and had sole control of the finances. He attempted to hit her on many occasions, and did strike her when she was older. The husband developed dementia in his later years, and all his negative characteristics came to the fore. He couldn't control his temper. On one occasion, he pushed her to the floor, resulting in permanent injury to a weak hip (An account of elder abuse told to the Panel on Violence Against Women)*

Spousal abuse can begin in old age or it can worsen during the senior years because of factors such as the onset of dementia in abusers, increased social isolation, or an increase in life stresses. More commonly, the physical abuse experienced by elderly women is a continuation of long-term patterns of spousal violence. The elderly can also be vulnerable to abuse by caretakers including adult children. Physical abuse of the elderly is the intentional and non-therapeutic infliction of physical pain or injury. It can involve hitting, slapping, grabbing, pushing, burning, sexual mistreatment, physical restraint or physical coercion.

Physical abuse affects at least 0.5% of seniors at home, an estimated 12,000. About one quarter of respondents to Professor Podnieks's survey said that the physical abuse they experienced necessitated medical attention at least once. In the majority of cases, the abuser was a spouse.

## *Neglect*

*"Often it's the least capable child who's left to look after a parent, the one who never really grew up, found a job, learned to cook. They have no idea how to do it."*

Neglect of the elderly can take the form of intentional or non intentional withholding of food, medication, clothing, hygiene, housing, or medical care. The elderly may be left in unsafe places or left alone for lengthy periods. Neglect can be active, if it is done on purpose, or neglect can be passive, the result perhaps of poor communication or failure to recognize the

needs of the elderly person. Neglected elders are often widows with health conditions that limit their activities and who have few social supports. It is estimated that at least 0.4% of seniors at home are neglected.

## *Why It Happens*

*"We have interviewed people who were beaten for 60 years of life, first by a parent, then by the husband, and then by the son." (Elizabeth Pittaway, University of Victoria)*

Elder abuse by family members has been linked by researchers to a variety of factors.

### **CONTINUATION OF SPOUSAL ABUSE**

If a marriage has been characterized by abuse — be that emotional, sexual or physical there is no reason to believe that this pattern will be disturbed simply with the passage of time. Indeed, spousal abuse may escalate in frequency and severity in the senior years.

### **REPLICATION OF CHILD ABUSE**

Parents who abused their children when young could be at higher risk than average of abuse by their adult children. The reason is not entirely clear but it could be that the children never learned healthy coping strategies to deal with the stresses often experienced by caregivers. As the parents of young children, the seniors responded to caregiver stress with abuse and so the adult children do the same. In any event, this type of abuse reflects long- term family problems and unresolved parent/child conflicts.

### **INTERDEPENDENCIES**

As one might expect, victims of elder abuse can be dependent on their abusers, perhaps financially or for personal care. The situation is often reversed however. Research has shown that abusers are often financially dependent upon the elderly people they victimize. Resentments and feelings of inadequacy can sometimes manifest themselves in abuse.

### **STRESS**

Caring for aging relatives can be stressful if their needs are demanding and unrelenting. The label "sandwich generation" describes those who care for both their own young children and their elderly parents, compounding the stress. The vast majority of family caregivers execute their responsibilities without resorting to abuse. Nevertheless, some experts see caregiver stress as a common cause of elder abuse, especially if the caregiver is experiencing other life stresses such as financial or marital problems and has no effective social support network. Abusive caregivers may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility, resentful, angry, and trapped in a daily grind of tasks for which there is no predictable end. Especially as the mental and physical capacity of the senior wanes over time, frustration can build to the point where some caregivers become emotionally and physically abusive.

### **PERSONALITY OF THE ABUSER**

Research has shown that abusers of the elderly are often dependent on drugs or alcohol, so they may generally use inappropriate coping strategies for problems and stress in their lives. Abusers of the elderly may be mentally ill, developmentally delayed, or be experiencing dementia and do not consciously intend to inflict the injuries they do.

### **ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ELDERLY**

Those who advocate for seniors point out that ageist stereotypes are common in our society. Some people see seniors in a negative light, as slow, useless, unattractive or unintelligent. Such attitudes may make it easier for abusers to rationalize and legitimize their actions toward the elderly (e.g., she doesn't care if she is only bathed once a week). Some seniors will also internalize these negative messages and see themselves as undeserving of assistance or respect.

#### THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY OF SENIORS

Some seniors retire in comfort and can afford adequate housing and the purchase of the support services that are increasingly necessary as they grow older. Many, however, live in poverty, especially true of women. Some seniors have supportive families upon whom to rely for assistance. Others are alone. Social and economic marginality can leave the elderly vulnerable to abuse by having to rely unduly on people who take advantage of them or who are not appropriate caregivers.

### *Why Elder Abuse Goes Unreported*

*"The victims don't call [the police] because, come the next day, they're afraid they will have no one to look after them, they're afraid of reprisal or of being institutionalized, and they prefer the abuse to that."  
(Police Constable)*

Seniors may be unwilling or reluctant to report abuse for any or all of the reasons already addressed in this booklet, including self-blame, shame and financial dependency, fear of disbelief, fear of reprisal, social isolation, or being unaware of support resources. They may have been disempowered from making decisions by years of verbal abuse and messages of their worthlessness. Or they may distrust the police and the criminal justice system if they encountered an unhelpful response to a previous attempt to report. They may have adopted defensive coping strategies such as seeing the abuse as normal, minimizing its negative impact, or drinking to dull the pain. As with women of all ages, some face obstacles to reporting such as language barriers or distrust of authorities brought from countries of origin. Rural and northern women will probably not have access to the range of resources available in cities.

These reasons which can prevent reporting in all cases of family violence are joined by others especially relevant to seniors. Members of older generations of women may have been imbued strongly with the sentiment of "till death do us part" or hold a religious bias against divorce. They may have been socialized to be submissive to the authority of men, to accept abusive behaviour as an unfortunate but normal part of marriage, to perceive inadequacies within themselves as the cause of the abuse, or to try and change their own behaviour in an attempt to prevent recurrences of abuse. Such patterns of thought and behaviour may have developed well before family violence became a public issue in the 1960s and 1970s.

The elderly may be less likely to know a friend or family member who came forward to acknowledge a violent relationship. Neither do they see women of their generation reflected in media campaigns or pamphlet literature on family violence. Their symptoms of depression, hopelessness and despair may have long-ago been mislabeled as psychiatric problems, before there was widespread understanding among helping professionals of domestic violence. They may even have attempted to get help in the past, only to be met with disbelief or blame.

And while social isolation is a factor common to many people who experience family violence, it may be especially acute in the case of elder abuse.

Researchers have identified a variety of factors which work to prevent the elderly from contacting the authorities about caregiver abuse. Fear of institutionalization or abandonment is key. Poor health or a physical handicap may leave an elderly person entirely dependent on an abusive family member for personal care or companionship. They may also be financially dependent on the abuser. Risk for caretaker abuse may rise as the senior gets older, at the same time that dependency is increasing. The arrest or alienation of the abuser could trigger the end to the senior's independent living, a fact which might discourage the senior from complaining to the authorities. Finally, communication disabilities may prevent some seniors from accessing assistance.

## *What To Do If You Suspect An Elderly Person Is A Victim Of Abuse*

*Service providers are often faced with the dilemma of maintaining a delicate balance between the client's desire for autonomy and the community's interest in protecting its citizens. An individual's right to live at risk and refuse intervention must be respected (Elder Abuse: A Practical Handbook for Service Providers)*

If you know a senior who is in danger or at risk of serious harm, call the police immediately. In all other cases where you have a reasonable belief that an elderly person is being abused, your response may depend in great part on the degree to which the person is capable of recognizing their own plight and seeking help for themselves. Existing laws are premised on the belief that seniors have the right to choose how to live their lives as long as they are not harming others. The law also assumes that adults are mentally competent to make their own decisions unless it is legally proven otherwise. Authorities can offer assistance but abused seniors can refuse that help, as long as they are capable of understanding the available options and deciding from among them.

No matter how well-meaning, to take away a senior's right to make their own decisions would be to treat them like children. It may be the person's conscious choice not to report, based on a thoughtful consideration of the consequences of reporting. For example, laws in some areas do not protect abused seniors from being removed from their homes for their own safety while the abusers remain in the home. Unlike child abuse, reporting of elder abuse is not mandatory in most areas, unless the abuse is taking place in a nursing home, hospital or other similar facility.

If you suspect a mentally capable senior is being abused, you can help them best by focusing on the causes of the abuse and the impediments they face in making the decision to take action about the abuse. Break their isolation, validate their right to find the abuse unacceptable, and lessen their vulnerability. For example, connect them with seniors' groups and a support network, explore alternate housing options or arrange for a visiting nurse or other in-home care to monitor the situation.

Point out that the abusive behaviour need not be tolerated. For some people, it could be the first time they have heard that message. Adopt a non-blaming approach, however, and be kind, supportive, and respectful. Provide information about elder abuse, the available legal options and the telephone numbers of local resources. Or, with their permission, you can advise the family of your concerns and/or call the police.

Sometimes the best course of action is to assist the abuser. Arrange respite for stressed caregivers and connect them with support (e.g., the Alzheimer's Society understands the situation of those providing care to Alzheimer's sufferers). Some abusive caregivers will benefit from therapy, addiction counselling or training in life skills and emotionally-healthy coping strategies. Securing them independent housing may also help in some cases.

## *If You Are Abused*

*I think it was during my second last hospitalization [for physical injuries] my psychiatrist ... asked me if there was anywhere else I could go for a few months when I left the hospital. I think [my husband] knew something was wrong. I did go to my sister's for a couple of weeks but then I had to go back home. Things were worse than ever (The story of "Eve")*

At the age of 75, after almost 50 years of marriage, "Eve" did leave her abusive husband, with the help and encouragement of a VON home-care nurse who recognized the abuse. Eve stayed for a while in a shelter for abused women where they helped her move into a retirement residence. The transition has not always been easy. As with many women in her situation, Eve had never dealt with financial matters such as banking, taxes, or pensions. She had to go to court to get an equitable division of the marital assets so she could pay her living expenses. But she found support and assistance in these and other tasks. If you are an abused senior, you can get assistance. The first step is to make sure someone knows about your situation.

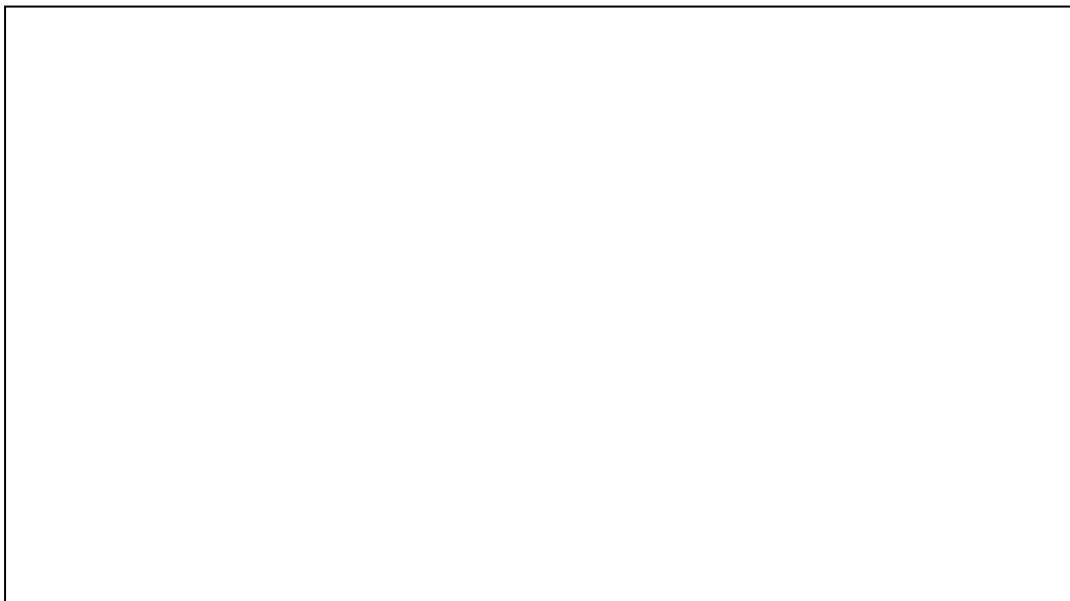
## *Victims And Caregivers: Where To Go For Information*

Seniors, caregivers and concerned relatives and friends can find information and referrals from a variety of sources:

- the staff of your local seniors centre can refer you to someone who can answer your questions or provide assistance
- your physician or other health care providers are trained to respond to elder abuse
- public health departments are familiar both with the issue of elder abuse and with the local resources
- someone at your church or place of worship may be able to offer support and suggest ways to help
- libraries have information booklets and pamphlets on elder abuse
- local women's shelters or transition houses understand the dynamics of family violence and can help with support and referrals

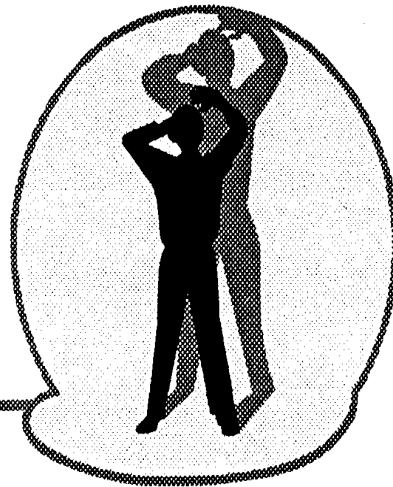
- the office of the Attorney General or the Ombudsman can help you understand the laws of your area concerning the protection of mentally incapable adults and they may be able to intervene to prevent further financial abuse

If your concern involves spousal abuse of a senior, any of the sources listed in the section on partner abuse can also provide formation and/or referral. In an emergency situation, call the Police an abused women s hotline, or your local distress or crisis helpline (look on page 1 of your telephone directory for the numbers).





# Sexual Offences



## Rape

Rape occurs whenever a male person ("the accused") has sexual intercourse with another person ("the complainant"):(

1. Without the consent of the complainant or is reckless as to whether she consents. For example, thinking that her "NO" actually means "YES".
2. With consent where the consent:
  - a) is extorted by threat or fear of bodily harm to the complainant or to another;
  - b) is obtained by false or fraudulent representations as to the nature of the intercourse;
  - c) is obtained by personating someone else;
  - d) is obtained by unlawfully detaining the complainant.

### CAN A HUSBAND RAPE HIS WIFE?

Yes. Act 31 of 2000 removed the conjugal rights of a husband absolutely, and thereby making sexual assault by a husband in certain circumstances irrelevant. Therefore, all males whether married or unmarried, are guilty of rape whenever they have sexual intercourse with another person without her consent.

### THE NATURE OF THE CRIME

Rape is a crime of violence, not a crime of love or passion.

Victims never ask to be raped, and their demeanour, manner of dress, or their sexual activities must never be used to justify this act. The law holds that even a prostitute can be raped. Once a victim does not consent, e.g., saying NO, running away, struggling, crying and other forms of active or passive resistance; it is a crime for a man to have sexual intercourse with her.

The nature of the relationship between the parties does not matter e.g. engaged persons, friends, etc. The slightest penetration of the vagina by the penis is an act of sexual intercourse, even if there is no ejaculation.

## ► VICTIMS AND ASSAILANTS

There are no special characteristics to rape victims or the perpetrators. Old, young, rich, poor, able and infirm, can equally be victims/perpetrators. However, by law, a boy under the age of 14 years is deemed incapable of committing rape. In light of changing societal conditions and child development, it may be necessary to review this position.



## WAYS TO AVOID BEING ATTACKED AT HOME.

- Ensure that your home is equipped with good locks and bolts.
- Never leave doors and windows unsecured particularly at ground level. Strangers may barge into your home.
- Avoid sleeping with doors and/or windows open.
- Never go outside alone to check on strange sounds. Secure the premises and call police, friends/relatives.
- Be sure that strangers e.g. meter men are properly screened and identified before letting them enter your home. Even be careful with casual acquaintances.

## OUT OF THE HOME.

- Don't ask strangers for directions; find a police officer, or other official.
- Avoid dark or unfamiliar places, especially when alone.
- Avoid going out alone, especially at night. Go with friends.
- Walk with a phone card or other means of making calls e.g. cellular phone.
- Always walk in a manner which allows you to face oncoming traffic.
- Always be alert and notice strange persons who may be watching/following you.
- Never hitch-hike. This is particularly dangerous.

## AT PARTIES:

- When attending functions, arrange transportation to take you there and back beforehand, and where you will be picked up.
- Always let someone know your
- Always get your own drinks, and observe how it is being prepared.
- Don't leave your drinks unattended, someone may spike it.
- Never get drunk, this retards your assessment and reaction.



## CAR SAFETY:

- Never park your car in unlit/deserted areas.
- Always know exactly where it is parked, and have your keys ready when you approach it.
- Check the interior of your car before entering.
- Always drive with doors locked and windows up, if possible.
- Never pick up hitch-hikers.
- Keep your vehicle properly maintained, and ensure that it has fuel, a spare wheel, and a jack.

- If you suspect that you are being followed don't drive home. Drive straight to the nearest police station or safe area.
- If you get a flat tire in an unsafe area, drive to a more secure location. It is better to lose a tire than to be attacked.

**GENERAL:**

- Walk with personal alarm devices, such as whistles and sirens. Remember that mace and pepper spray are both illegal in Trinidad and Tobago.
- Get self defence training.
- Always be alert and aware of your surroundings.

**WHAT TO DO IF CONFRONTED**

- Run away and raise an alarm if possible.
- Set off any personal alarm systems that you carry.
- Do not struggle with an armed attacker; he may not hesitate to injure you.
- If the attacker is unarmed, you may be able to ward him off or raise an alarm e.g. screaming "fire" or "police".
- Try to stay calm and avoid doing anything to set off a violent assailant. Never insult or berate him.
- Plead with your assailant and try to talk him out of it. Try to let him see you as a person and not a sexual object.
- If all else fails, tell him that you have your period, or that you have a serious contagious disease. Urinating or excreting on yourself might also turn off an attacker.
- Pay particular attention to the physical characteristics, clothing, and general condition of the assailant. This is very important for later identification.
- Report all attacks to the police, even if it did not result in an actual rape.

**SOME DOS AND DON'TS FOR VICTIMS**

Despite the best precautions, some women still become victims of rape. Men who rape make the decision to do so and will generally choose the time and place. The following advice should be followed by victims. Some of them may appear repulsive to some victims, but they are necessary to preserve evidence, and identify and convict the assailant.

**DO:**

- Call for the police and/or other help immediately.
- Make sure and secure your home, or get away from the place of attack to a place of safety.
- try to keep as warm as possible.
- Make a report to the police, even if you do not intend to follow up on it. This may save another person from a similar attack.
- Seek medical attention as soon as possible. Once the police investigate they will take you to the nearest doctor or hospital for an examination. This should confirm injury, and the fact that intercourse took place. Follow-up tests are important to determine disease and/or pregnancy from the attack.

**DO NOT:**

- Bathe or rinse your mouth.
- Wash or change the clothes worn during the attack.
- Straighten or interfere with anything in the room or other crime scene.
- Drink alcohol or take drugs.
- Stay in the place of attack if it remains unsafe.

## EFFECTS OF RAPE ON THE VICTIM

The effects of a sexual attack often increase after the incident. The victim will exhibit physical, emotional, and behavioural characteristics which will take time and effort to overcome; some may never go away. The reactions may be different depending on the victim.

### PHYSICAL:

- Injuries received in the attack, e.g. wounds, fractures.
- Recovery being drugged or chloroformed.
- Possible pregnancy, or infectious diseases.
- Inability to sleep, or sleeping too much.
- Rashes, diarrhea, or overall illness.

### BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES:

- Lack of interest in appearance, or preoccupation with appearance.
- Crying or hysteria.
- Eating too much or too little.
- Radical mood swings, e.g. anger, guilt, depression.
- Talk of suicide, or attempting suicide.
- Prone to accidents.
- Sexual promiscuity, or sexual avoidance.
- Fall in work standards and lack of concentration.
- Seclusion from people, and not trusting anyone.
- Difficult to communicate with.
- Generally impulsive and unpredictable behaviour, e.g. drinking alcohol, taking drugs, getting into fights.
- Avoid being touched or kissed especially by men.

### EMOTIONAL DISTRESS:

Victims may blame themselves for the attack, e.g. "I should have fought harder", "Good girls don't get raped", "I wish I was dead, because I'm no good to anyone now". Others blame God "There is no God, because he wouldn't let this happen to me". Some will blame men in general "I hate men, they are all animals".

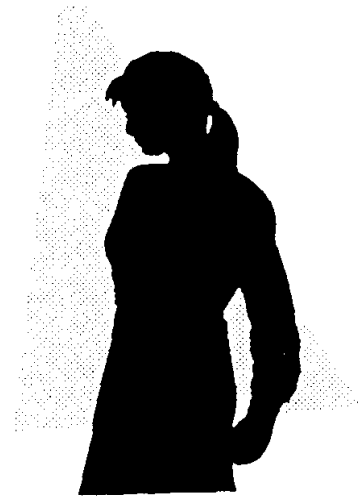
Such emotional disturbances often create many fears and phobias in victims that make them very anti-social. These fears are all real to the victim, even if to an objective person they appear to be unfounded.

- Fear of being left alone, or being in secluded or poorly lit areas.
- Seeing a man who resembles the attacker.
- Odours associated with the attack, e.g. alcohol, cologne, or perspiration.
- Fear of associating with people, because they feel that everyone knows and is laughing at them.
- Fear of certain sounds which were previously ignored.
- A general fear of people.

## RESPONSES TO THE ATTACK

### FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

They are also victims because they must interact with the person assaulted, and may themselves need support and assistance in coping with the aftermath. Some of the effects are as follows:



- Blaming response. They often will blame the victim and/or each other, out of their inability to deal with their frustration.
- Keeping an impossible secret. They will deny the assault, even when the facts are known to others. This leads to increased isolation and loneliness because the victim is forced to live this lie.
- The silent conspiracy. They do not talk about the situation with the victim. Time heals all wounds being the apparent rationale. On the contrary, this promotes fear, guilt, anger and frustration.
- Rule creation and enforcement. They will control the life and movement of the victim in areas unrelated to the attack. This results in feelings of shame, anger and powerlessness, and adds to the existing problem.
- Grief-stricken relatives. They often argue over whose suffering is greatest and ignore the victim's needs.

#### INVESTIGATORS:

Insensitive and unprofessional conduct by police responders and investigators, often exacerbate the injury and hurt suffered by the victim. Some victims are asked embarrassing questions in an insensitive manner, and often in the presence of others not involved in the investigation. Many victims prefer to remain quiet rather than run the gauntlet of ogling and amused officers. The lack of proper accommodations at most stations, and the shortage of trained trauma staff, must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

#### MEDICAL PERSONNEL:

Medical personnel, either through overwork or lack of training, are too often rude to and impatient with victims, especially those who have not suffered obvious physical injuries. Emergency rooms not equipped with trained psychologists to handle rape victims.

#### MALE SUPPORT:

Male support is crucial in combating this scourge. All men have a duty to respect the right of women to control their own bodies.

They must remember that their mothers, sisters and daughters can also become the victims of vicious men.

#### THE COURTS:

The courts provide some assistance in that the law protects the identity of the victim as much as possible. The victim's identity cannot be published except with the permission of the court.

All cases of rape or sexual assault involving children shall be heard in a closed court, unless the court otherwise directs. Judges also have discretion to clear the court when a victim is giving evidence in the case.

#### NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Fortunately for women there are existing groups committed to providing treatment, assistance, and expert and confidential counselling to rape victims. The most well known is the RAPE CRISIS CENTRE which has its headquarters at 40 Woodford Street, Port of Spain. Many other organizations that were formed to deal specifically with domestic violence also provide assistance to rape victims, like Families In Action and The Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

## *Incest*

Incest is having a sexual relationship with any blood relative, i.e. parent, child, sister, brother, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, niece, or nephew. Like rape, this crime is prevalent in Trinidad and Tobago, but is even more underreported, so its true extent may never be

known. Though the data suggests that it occurs more in poor rural districts, the victims can come from all races, classes, and religions. Most of the victims are girls of tender years, who by law cannot consent to sexual intercourse. It is one of the most cruel forms of rape, because it can go on for many years, with most victims only reporting the acts when they are much older.

#### **WHO COMMITS INCEST**

Fathers, grandfathers, brothers, and uncles are the usual culprits. Many mothers are aware of these attacks on their daughters, but keep quiet out of physical intimidation by the man, or fear of losing his economic support if he leaves, or is sent to prison.

Some families also adopt the Ostrich mentality and pretend that the problem does not exist. In many cases the child is not believed when she complains about the acts.

#### **EFFECTS OF INCEST AND RELATED SEXUAL ABUSE**

Children are generally more fragile than adults, and bad experiences during childhood often tend to shape a person's entire life. The effects of incest tend to mirror those associated with other forms of rape. However, in the case of a child, the closer the relationship with the offender, the more likely that their emotional and psychological development will be affected. This can make the victim incapable of establishing normal sexual relations, or trusting anyone in the future. For the child the sexual act will often be their first sexual encounter, and they are neither physically nor emotionally equipped to deal with the effects. The problems of pregnancy and sexual diseases will be exacerbated when the victim is a child.

#### **HOW THE LAW PROTECTS CHILDREN**

The laws of Trinidad and Tobago prohibit sexual intercourse between:

1. An adult person and
  - a) An adopted child, stepchild, foster child, dependent.
  - b) An employee of minor age. A minor is anyone under 18 years of age.
2. A male person and a female who is not his wife, and who is under the age of 14 years.
3. A male person and a female person who are not married and where one party is aged 14-16 years old, whether or not there is consent to the act.

To escape liability the accused party must convince the court:

1. He/She honestly believed the victim to be 16 years old or more.
2. He/She was not more than 3 years older than the victim at the time of the act, and the evidence discloses that the victim actively encouraged the intercourse.

If the intention of these laws is to protect minors from sexual exposure and/or abuse from too early an age, then it appears contradictory to some that an adult can legally do such acts under the sanctity of marriage. 'Conjugal rights can be a vehicle for child sexual abuse. However, this is the state of the law at this time.

#### **PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:**

There is no statutory limitation period for such crimes, so victims are encouraged to report it as soon as they are able to. Perpetrators of incest and sexual abuse of children often start with one child, but when the child reaches an age where she is likely to resist, the offender turns his attention to younger siblings. This pattern of abuse sometimes affects all the girl children in a household.





## PREVENTING THE ABUSE

It is more difficult for children to protect themselves from abuse than it is for adults. Most of the abuse takes place in the home, and is committed by a relative that they trust, respect, and sometimes fear.

They are confused by the situation and don't know where to turn.

## ADULTS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM HARM.

The best form of protection is communicating with the child in a manner which will make her/him feel comfortable in telling you anything. Once this trust and understanding is established, the child should be taught how to handle certain situations.

The following is a recommended way of communicating information about sexual abuse to children:

1. Your body belongs to you. No one should touch you if you don't want them to.
2. "YES" and "NO" feelings — being touched by someone you love is supposed to give you a good feeling. Being hugged and kissed supposed to make you feel happy inside. You get a "YES" feeling inside. But if someone touches you, and you feel confused or uncomfortable, this is "NO" feeling. If someone should touch you in a way you do not like, you have the right to stop it by saying NO. You have the right to say NO to anyone, even adults. It does not matter if that person is your father, grandfather, favourite uncle, schoolteacher or policeman.
3. Do not allow anyone to touch those parts of your body called the private parts". These are the parts of the body that in boys are usually covered by pants or briefs and on girls by vest and panties. If someone wants to touch you there, or wants you to touch him or her there, tell them "NO" in a firm voice.
4. Tell someone you trust — you must tell the person "DON'T DO THAT TO ME". You can run away from them, and avoid being alone with them.
5. The person who touches you may tell you to keep it a secret. He/She may say if you tell anyone:
  - a) You will be taken away from home.
  - b) He/She will be taken away from you, and there will be no one to look after you.
  - c) He/She will spank or punish you.
  - d) God will punish you.

You must not believe them, and you can tell someone you trust what that person did to you.

6. Adults don't ask children to keep secrets. Secrets are for birthday presents and things like that. Secrets are for that special hiding place you and your friends may have. Secrets are not for other things. It's not fair for an adult to ask you to keep another kind of secret. Once an adult who touches you tells you to keep it a secret, you will know that what they did is wrong.

7. Sometimes the person you tell may not believe you. An adult sometimes finds it hard to believe that another adult would do something unpleasant to you. If this happens, tell someone else. Go on telling people e.g. your mother, father, auntie, teacher or neighbour. Do this until someone believes you and say they will help you, and they do so.

## PLEASE REMEMBER

1. It's not your fault if someone touches you in a way that confuses you or makes you feel uncomfortable, and gives you that "NO" feeling. Children are not to be blamed for what older



people do to them.

2. If someone interferes with you in a way that makes you uncomfortable, you can tell them to stop.

3. If people pretend to touch you by accident, it's still OK to object and tell them not to do it again.

4. If the person tells you that you are making a fuss about nothing, you should still tell someone you trust.

5. If you feel like it, you could firmly remove someone's hand from your body.

6. Avoid being alone with someone who has touched you in a way you don't like. If this cannot be avoided, then tell them that you will talk or scream if they touch you.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

RAPE CRISIS SOCIETY

40 Woodford Street, P05. Tel.: 622-7273, Fax: 622-1079

1 2 San Fernando Street, San Fernando. Tel: 657-5355

MAVAW (Men Against Violence Against Women)

Contact Donald Berment, Tel: 637-0924



# A Personal Profile:



## Evaluating Your Health

Your health is influenced by behaviours in a number of aspects of living. This personal health profile will help you assess these behaviours. For each statement, circle the number of the response that best describes your behaviour, or how you think you will behave when confronted with a particular situation. At the end of each section, add the points received on the statements in that section and record your point total on the appropriate line. At the conclusion of the inventory you will be able to make a broad interpretation of the influence of your behaviours on your personal health status.

### ► STRESS MANAGEMENT

- |   |                        |                          |                          |                       |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. I seek out change and accept its presence with a sense of confidence and anticipation.                               | 1<br>Rarely<br>if Ever | 2<br>Some of<br>the Time | 3<br>Most of<br>the Time | 4<br>Almost<br>Always |
| 2. I participate regularly in a physical activity that allows me to expend nervous energy.                              | 1<br>Rarely<br>if Ever | 2<br>Some of<br>the Time | 3<br>Most of<br>the Time | 4<br>Almost<br>Always |
| 3. I turn to friends for advice and assistance during periods of disruption in my life.                                 | 1<br>Rarely<br>if Ever | 2<br>Some of<br>the Time | 3<br>Most of<br>the Time | 4<br>Almost<br>Always |
| 4. I periodically re-evaluate my experiences with distressful events in anticipation of future events of the same type. | 1<br>Rarely<br>if Ever | 2<br>Some of<br>the Time | 3<br>Most of<br>the Time | 4<br>Almost<br>Always |
| 5. I seek the counsel of professional advisors when stress becomes too difficult to manage.                             | 1<br>Rarely<br>if Ever | 2<br>Some of<br>the Time | 3<br>Most of<br>the Time | 4<br>Almost<br>Always |

- |   |                            |                              |                              |                           |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 6. I seek comfort and support from my faith when faced with a difficult period of adjustment. | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

► **PHYSICAL FITNESS**

- |   |                            |                              |                              |                           |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. I participate in vigorous activity for approximately 30 minutes four times per week.                   | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |
| 2. I am active during the day and prefer a more vigorous approach to work and leisure activity.           | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |
| 3. I do exercises specifically designed to condition my muscles and joints.                               | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |
| 4. I enter into vigorous activity only after I am warmed up, and I warm down following vigorous activity. | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |
| 5. I select properly designed and well-maintained equipment and clothing for each activity.               | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |
| 6. I listen to my body regarding injury and fatigue, and I seek appropriate care when injured.            | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |

► **SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

- |  |                            |                              |                              |                           |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. I feel comfortable and confident when meeting people for the first time.  | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |
| 2. I establish social relationships with people of both sexes with equal ease and enjoyment.                           | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |
| 3. I participate in a wide variety of groups, including educational, recreational, religious, and occupational groups. | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |
| 4. I find the roles of leader and subordinate to be equally acceptable.  | <b>1</b><br>Rarely if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost Always |

- |   |                               |                                 |                                 |                              |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 5. I seek out opportunities to become proficient at a variety of social skills.     | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 6. I am open and accessible to others in the development of intimate relationships. | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |

► **NUTRITION**

- |   |                               |                                 |                                 |                              |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. I select a wide variety of foods in an attempt to eat a balanced diet.   | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 2. I select breads, cereals, fresh fruits, and vegetables in preference to pastries, candies, sodas, and fruits canned in heavy syrup.                                      | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 3. I select such foods as peas, beans, and peanut butter as my primary sources of protein while limiting my consumption of red meat and high-fat dairy products.            | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 4. I select foods prepared with unsaturated vegetable oils while reducing my consumption of red meats, organ meats, dairy products, and foods prepared with lard or butter. | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 5. I limit snacking, and I select nutritious foods when I do snack.   | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 6. I attempt to balance my caloric intake with my activity level.   | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |

► **ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG USE**

- |   |                               |                                 |                                 |                              |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. I abstain from alcohol use, or I use alcohol infrequently and in very limited amounts.   | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 2. I avoid riding with persons who are consuming alcohol, and I drive defensively, remaining aware that other drivers may be using alcohol. | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |

3. I avoid the use of tobacco products in all forms, including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and smokeless tobacco products.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always

4. I limit my contact with others who are using tobacco, particularly when in confined spaces or when exposure would be for an extended period.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always

5. I take prescription drugs only in the manner prescribed, and I use over-the-counter drugs in accordance with directions.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always

6. I refrain from using illegal drugs.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always

► SAFETY

1. I attempt to identify the sources of risk or potential danger in each new setting or activity.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always

2. I learn procedures and precautions before undertaking new recreational or occupational activities.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always

3. I select appropriate equipment for all activities and maintain equipment in good working order.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always

4. I curtail my participation in activities when I am not feeling well or am distracted by other demands.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always

5. I refrain from using alcohol or drugs when engaged in potentially dangerous recreational or occupational activities.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always

6. I repair or report dangerous conditions to individuals responsible for their maintenance.

1	2	3	4
Rarely if Ever	Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Almost Always



► **SELF-CARE**

- |   |                               |                                 |                                 |                              |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. I maintain an accurate, updated personal health history.   | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 2. I routinely monitor my weight and blood pressure, as well as factors related to specific conditions applicable to my health.             | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 3. I practice home dental health care, including brushing and flossing.   | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 4. I maintain my immunization status and receive boosters when scheduled or required by specific conditions.                                | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 5. I take prescription medication through the entire course of the prescribed period of use rather than stopping use when symptoms subside. | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 6. I consult a reliable home-medical reference book before beginning care.  | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |

► **ANSWER WHEN APPLICABLE**

- |  |                               |                                 |                                 |                              |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. I routinely examine my testicles for the presence of small masses or other unusual signs. | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 2. I routinely examine my breasts for the presence of masses or other unusual signs.         | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 3. I routinely receive a Pap smear test.   | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
| 4. I use my birth control technique in the manner intended to maximize its effectiveness.    | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |

► **HEREDITARY**

- |   |                               |                                 |                                 |                              |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. I can identify members of my family tree for the previous three generations. | <b>1</b><br>Rarely<br>if Ever | <b>2</b><br>Some of<br>the Time | <b>3</b><br>Most of<br>the Time | <b>4</b><br>Almost<br>Always |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|

2. I can identify the age at death and the cause of death for all family members to whom I am genetically related for the previous three generations.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

3. I receive medical consultation for conditions for which I may have a genetic predisposition (diabetes, hypertension, etc.)

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

4. I limit my exposure to radiation and to toxic environmental pollutants.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

5. I will openly share information concerning inheritance abnormalities with potential mates.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

6. I will seek genetic counselling for known inherited conditions before having children.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

#### ► SLEEP, REST, AND RELAXATION

1. I plan my daily schedule to allow time for leisure activity.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

2. I plan my daily schedule to allow time for contemplation, meditation, or prayer.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

3. I receive between 7 and 8 hours of sleep daily.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

4. I refrain from using sleep-inducing over-the-counter drugs.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

5. I curtail activities when I need to recover from illnesses and injuries.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

6. I attempt to leave the demands of work, school, or parenting outside of my leisure or relaxation time of day.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rarely If Ever</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>

## ► HEALTH CONSUMERISM

- |  |                     |                       |                       |                    |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. I am skeptical of practitioners and clinics who advertise or offer services at rates substantially lower than those charged by reputable providers. | 1<br>Rarely if Ever | 2<br>Some of the Time | 3<br>Most of the Time | 4<br>Almost Always |
| 2. I have the financial resources necessary to cover the costs associated with a major illness or hospitalization.                                     | 1<br>Rarely if Ever | 2<br>Some of the Time | 3<br>Most of the Time | 4<br>Almost Always |
| 3. I am skeptical of claims that "guarantee" the effectiveness of a particular health care service or product.   | 1<br>Rarely if Ever | 2<br>Some of the Time | 3<br>Most of the Time | 4<br>Almost Always |
| 4. I accept information that is deemed valid by the established scientific community.  | 1<br>Rarely if Ever | 2<br>Some of the Time | 3<br>Most of the Time | 4<br>Almost Always |
| 5. I pursue my rights in matters of misrepresentation or consumer dissatisfaction.   | 1<br>Rarely if Ever | 2<br>Some of the Time | 3<br>Most of the Time | 4<br>Almost Always |
| 6. I seek additional opinions regarding diagnoses indicating a need for surgery or other costly therapies.   | 1<br>Rarely if Ever | 2<br>Some of the Time | 3<br>Most of the Time | 4<br>Almost Always |

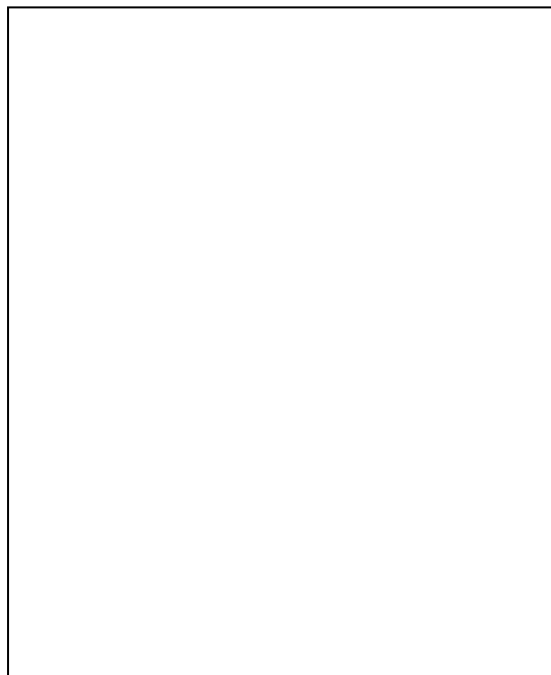
## ► INTERPRETATION

- 196-240 Behaviours are very supportive of high-level health.  
 151-195 Behaviours are relatively supportive of high-level health.  
 106-150 Behaviours are relatively destructive to high-level health.  
 60-105 Behaviours are very destructive to high-level health.

## ► TO CARRY THIS FURTHER . . .

Were you surprised at your score? Remember that this assessment provides a brief look at your health behaviours. It should help identify areas you may want to pay careful attention to as you read this book. The authors hope this assessment will serve as a positive motivator for you, regardless of your score. Remember that YOU can change your health behaviours. Good luck!

# PART THREE



MAN

TALK

